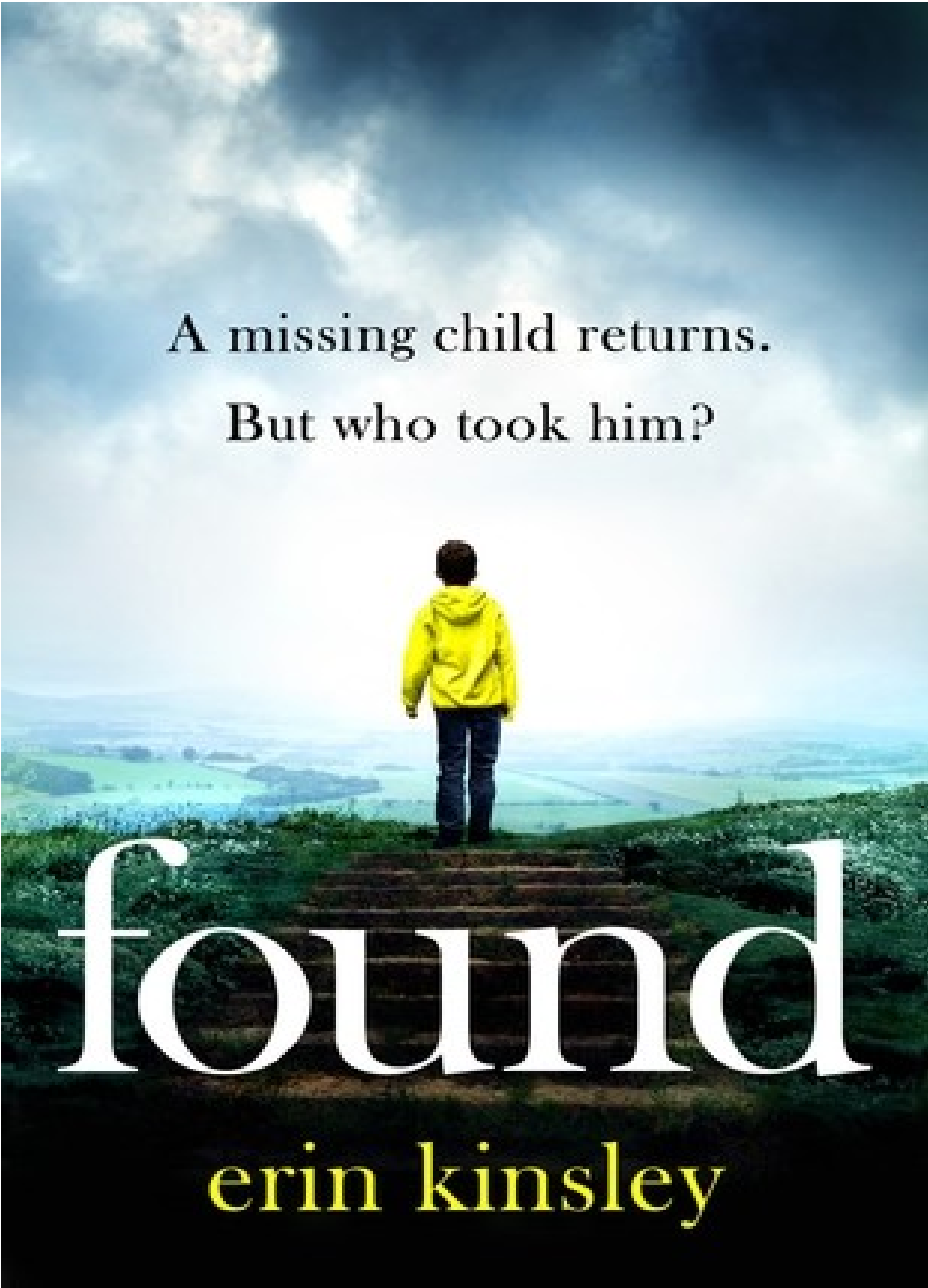
A child wearing a bright yellow hoodie and dark pants stands with their back to the camera on a grassy hilltop. They are looking out over a vast, hazy landscape of rolling hills and fields. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds, with a bright light source breaking through near the horizon.

A missing child returns.
But who took him?

found

erin kinsley

A child wearing a bright yellow jacket and dark pants stands with their back to the camera on a grassy hill. They are looking out over a vast, hazy landscape of rolling hills and fields. The sky above is filled with large, dramatic, grey and white clouds, with a bright light source breaking through near the horizon.

A missing child returns.
But who took him?

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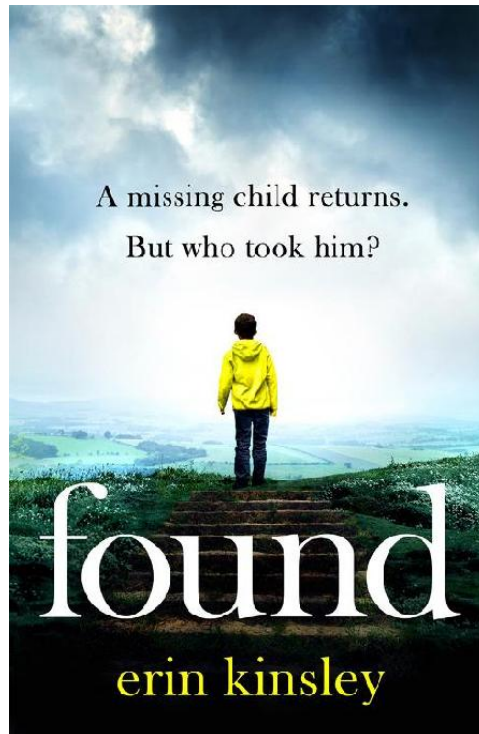
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erin Kinsley is a full-time writer. She grew up in Yorkshire and currently lives in East Anglia.

ABOUT THE BOOK



ONE CHILD IS SAFE . . . BUT HOW LONG UNTIL ANOTHER IS TAKEN?

When 11 year old Evan vanishes without trace, his parents are plunged into their worst nightmare – especially as the police, under massive pressure, have no answers.

But months later Evan is unexpectedly found, frightened and refusing to speak. His loving family realise life will never be the same again.

DI Naylor knows that unless those who took Evan are caught, other children are in danger. And with Evan silent, she must race against time to find those responsible . . .

For all those not found, and those who miss them

Your Worst Nightmare

ONE

11 October Berkshire

There are so many ifs, and so many if onlys. If only rugby practice hadn't over-run. If only Evan hadn't gone and lost a boot. If only he'd decided to bypass the newsagent's and had caught the earlier bus, the one he missed by just twenty seconds.

If only we could all sleep soundly at night, knowing we were safe from wicked people.

The Under-Twelves First Fifteen haven't played well, and there's a match against All Saints on Saturday. Mr Griffiths likes the school teams to succeed, so he makes the boys stay an extra five minutes, practising their passing in the rain. In the changing rooms, the boys pull off their muddy boots and socks, dropping their filthy shorts and shirts on the tiled floor as they run into the showers. The water, for once, is hotter than lukewarm, and Evan and Stewie linger under the jets, bringing feeling back to their cold-reddened hands and white-numb toes. By the time they're out and dressed, the other boys are gone. Mr Griffiths is in the staffroom, drinking the day's last mug of tea before he drives home.

Evan has lost a boot. Stewie doesn't help him look for it but leans impatiently against a stand of coat-pegs urging Evan to get a move on, while Evan lies down on the floor to search under the boot-racks, dirtying his trousers and his blazer. He finds the boot under someone's forgotten shorts, hangs the shorts up on a peg and stuffs the boot into his kitbag.

It's a little after five. As they head for the front doors, Stewie and Evan's voices echo in deserted corridors lined with cabinets of shields and silver trophies. In the photographs on the walls, the faces of past generations stare mutely through the glass, the bright youths of recent decades in lifelike colour, their predecessors in monochrome and sepia.

By the main entrance, Mr Prentice the caretaker is waiting to lock up, clinking an impatient rhythm on his thigh with a hoop of keys. He tells the boys to hurry up, and they do. The staff car park is all but empty, though Mr Griffiths' old Subaru is still there, as is the headmaster's Passat. The boys head down the drive towards the open gates, chattering about homework, about Xbox games and Saturday's coming match.

There's a van parked on the forecourt of the newsagent's on Belmont Avenue, and Mr Jadoon is watching a young Asian man carry cases of wine to the storeroom round the back. The boys search their pockets for coins, and Mr Jadoon leads them inside before going to stand sentinel by the CCTV monitor. Evan and Stewie dither over their choices, until Evan settles on a can of Fanta and Stewie chooses salt and vinegar crisps. By the time they reach the counter, there's another customer ahead of them; when he reaches out to pay for his milk, Stewie notices his tattoo, a red-and-black snake twisting on the back of his hand. Catching him admiring his artwork, the man gives Stewie a wink as he picks up his change.

As the boys go outside, the tattooed man is walking away from them, down Ruskin Road. The boys' route is along Belmont Avenue. Evan pops the tab of his Fanta and Stewie offers him a couple of his crisps. Their schoolbags – one for sports kit, one for books – are heavy, and, since he's small for his age, Evan's slow him down. There's a bus approaching, but Evan doesn't run to catch it because he hasn't finished his drink, and the driver won't let him on unless he dumps it. No one is waiting at the stop, and the bus sails by.

When they reach the bus shelter, the boys part company casually, expecting to be talking online in a while. Stewie walks on alone towards Church Road, and home. Evan lays his bags down on the pavement.

Seven minutes later, the next bus arrives, but Evan is no longer waiting at the stop. He and his bags are gone, but his can of pop is lying on its side, seeping sticky liquid into the gutter.

Evan's mum Claire has tea ready at six o'clock, but Evan isn't home. At quarter past, more annoyed than worried, she calls Stewie, who tells her what he can – which isn't much – and Claire thanks him. As she ends the call, the first tendrils of worry tighten in her stomach. When the door slams

at six-thirty, her eyes close in relief, but it isn't Evan who comes into the kitchen, but Matt. He tells her not to worry, and she starts making more calls. By seven, they're both beginning to panic, though Matt's hiding his fear with confident bluster. At eight, they ring the police. By the time they're taken seriously, it's gone eleven.

And by that time, Evan's in a very bad place indeed.

TWO

Stewie's mother Vicky switches on the bedside light and checks the time: 1.42 a.m. Someone's hammering at the front door, firing up a long-held dread of uniforms and bad news, but Paul's there in bed beside her, and Stewie and George are in their rooms. For a moment, Vicky doubts these certainties, and reaches out to touch Paul's back. His breathing changes, becoming quicker and shallower than the slow rhythms of deep sleep, and she knows he's at least half awake.

'There's someone at the door.'

She feels him tensing as he listens, but there's nothing to hear.

'You're dreaming,' he says. 'For God's sake, turn that light off.'

The hammering comes again. Now Paul's wide awake.

'Who the hell is that?' He squints towards the clock, but without his glasses, he can't read the face. 'What time is it?'

'Nearly two.' Vicky gets out of bed and puts on the pink dressing gown hanging behind the bedroom door. The room is cold; the heating won't come on for hours. As she opens the door, Paul moves to follow her. No one brings good news at this time of night, and he's thinking of his mother and father. Or maybe his brother, but wouldn't they just phone?

Vicky turns on the landing light. As she goes downstairs, the creaking of the treads seems loud. She switches on the hall light and the outside light over the front door, and through the frosted glass she sees two people. She decides to wait for Paul. The strangers at the door don't knock again, but stand and wait in silence.

Paul pulls on a pair of jeans and yesterday's T-shirt and finds his glasses. The anxiety for his mum and dad has solidified, and he comes downstairs at a run, not caring if he wakes the boys. He sees the figures at the door and glances at Vicky, who's standing back so he can be in charge. He picks up the keys from the hall table, then hesitates.

These people might be anyone.

He calls through the door.

‘Who is it?’

‘Police.’

Vicky’s hand goes to her mouth, and Paul’s head feels suddenly light. He fits the key to the lock and opens the door. The night air is dank, and the sodium-orange of the streetlights is hazy through fog. There’s a car parked across the driveway, a dark-coloured Peugeot. A man and a woman are standing on the step, both wearing suits as if it were the middle of the day. The man holds up a wallet with a badge.

‘Mr and Mrs Wareham?’ His manner is polite, but he’s not smiling. He closes the wallet in a practised movement, and slips it into his trouser pocket. ‘I’m Detective Sergeant Hagen, this is DI Naylor. Can we come in?’

There’s a moment’s silence. Paul fears the worst; for the first time in his life, he knows what people mean by going weak at the knees. Vicky is more composed. Her mother’s in a home, with severe dementia. Her passing would never warrant a visit from the police.

‘What’s this about?’ asks Paul.

‘If we could talk inside,’ says Hagen.

Vicky leads the way to the living room, wishing she’d tidied round before she went to bed. Last night’s wine glasses are on the coffee table, and the basket of ironing she never got to is on a chair. She picks up the basket and carries it out to the hall.

When she comes back, Naylor invites Paul and Vicky to take seats on the sofa, as if this is her house now. Naylor takes the armchair. She’s the kind of woman Paul might find attractive under other circumstances, the suit jacket hiding the kind of curves he likes, dark hair pinned up in a messy French twist. Hagen helps himself to a dining chair, placing it at the centre of the room. He sits down, his legs spread, leaning forward on to his thighs, taking up space. He looks long and hard at Paul, and then at Vicky, while Paul is wishing he would just deliver the blow.

‘I expect you’re wondering why we’re here,’ says Hagen. He speaks with a Geordie burr which evokes the mean streets of Newcastle, but Hagen never denies his suburban origins. ‘We apologise for disturbing you at this hour, but I’m sure you appreciate that sometimes we deal with events where

time is of the essence and we have to act quickly. Unfortunately, we're involved in such an incident tonight. A young boy has gone missing.'

Paul feels a huge sense of relief, and lets go the breath he didn't realise he was holding. Not his disaster, then, but someone else's. Immediately, he feels ashamed of his selfishness.

'Who?' asks Vicky.

'Evan Ferrers.'

'Evan? Really? Oh my God.' Vicky is baffled. 'But when can he possibly . . . What's going on?'

'Evan didn't come home from school yesterday,' says Naylor. Her tone is careful, and Paul suspects the script's rehearsed. 'Mrs Ferrers thinks he was with your son yesterday afternoon. Stewie, is it?'

'Stewie, yes. He and Evan were at rugby practice. I assume they left together. They usually do.'

'Did Mrs Ferrers phone here at all?'

'Well, yes,' says Vicky. 'She said she didn't know where Evan was and asked to speak to Stewie. I don't think he was much help, but she didn't ring again, so I just assumed Evan had come home. I never thought for one moment he'd still be missing. Oh God, I should have called her, shouldn't I? Poor Claire! How is she?'

'What time did Mrs Ferrers call?'

Mentally running through the evening's banal structure, Vicky shakes her head.

'I don't know. About six, six-thirty, I suppose.'

'I wonder if we could speak to Stewie, Mrs Wareham?'

The request feels polite, but from Hagen's face, Vicky knows the politeness is all veneer.

'But it's the middle of the night,' she objects. 'He's got school tomorrow.'

Paul, Hagen and Naylor all look at her, and Vicky blushes.

'I'm sorry,' she says. 'I'll go and wake him.'

Stewie's dreams have taken a nightmarish turn. A stealthy sniper lies in wait for him in a network of dark rooms. As she pushes open his bedroom door, Vicky is pointlessly quiet, conditioned by years of parenting. The light

from the landing forms a triangle on the carpet, acute at first, and as she opens the door wider, obtuse. It's geometry of the kind Stewie struggles with, but these days the more Paul tries to help him, the more Stewie becomes stubborn and shuts down.

His room smells unmistakably of him, a smell that's changed in recent months from the bubble-bath sweetness of little boyhood to supermarket deodorant and a base note of musk which permeates his sheets and all his clothes. The hoody and joggers he wore after school are heaped on the floor, and yesterday's uniform trousers hang from a belt-loop on a chair. There are posters on the walls – *The Walking Dead*, a Bugatti Veyron, the psychedelic masks of CamelPhat, whose music Vicky actually likes – and everywhere there's the clutter of Stewie's pastimes, DVDs and game CDs in and out of boxes, his skateboard, gloves and knee pads, the bike helmet he refuses to wear.

And in the midst of the chaos, there's Stewie, safe in this room where he should be, and Vicky believes she can imagine how Claire feels, how it would be to be standing in this doorway with Stewie missing, gone. Even the thought of it stirs her stomach, and her heart contracts as if a malicious hand has squeezed it, and her mind flashes up an image of herself, demented with grief.

She shuts the image down. Not me. Her.

The gratitude she feels is shameful, but even though she knows how base it is, the gratitude's still there.

Stewie's moving restlessly in his sleep, tormented by his Xbox hangover. In a loud whisper, she says his name, not wanting to startle him by waking him suddenly, forgetting that often these days it's difficult to wake him at all. But something in Stewie's subconscious is anxious to escape the sniper, and in the triangle of light from the landing, she sees his eyes blinking and bright.

'Are you awake, Stewie?'

His mother's presence in his room, in the dark, signals something's going on, and Stewie sits up.

'What's the matter? Is everyone OK?'

'You need to come downstairs.' Vicky's still whispering, thinking of

George. 'The police are here.' Stewie's face, half in shadow, shows he's startled, and she realises she's scared him, despite her best intentions. 'You haven't done anything wrong. They want to talk to you about Evan.'

'What about Evan?'

She hasn't thought what words to use, but actually, it doesn't matter.

'He didn't come home from school.'

'Yes, he did.' Stewie frowns. 'I saw him get on the bus.'

'Did you, Stewie?'

He considers.

'Not actually get on it.' He's climbing from the bed, wearing the look of puzzlement which was habitual to him when he was small. On his developing features, it's still endearing.

She reaches behind the door for the dressing gown he rarely wears, a present from his grandmother.

'Better put this on. The heating went off hours ago.'

For once, he puts on the dressing gown without argument.

In the kitchen, Paul's making tea, looking out as the kettle heats at the backs of the neighbours' houses. All are in darkness but one, where the downstairs lights are blazing. For a mad moment, Paul wonders if it's Evan's house, but they live two miles away. He finds the rarely used sugar bowl in the cupboard, and puts it on the tray with the best mugs, realising how much of his mother's training has rubbed off now he's confronted with authority. The kettle boils, and he makes four teas, adding milk. Finding four matching teaspoons in the cutlery drawer, he picks up the tray. *So much for me the rebel*, he thinks as he carries it through to the living room. So much for the years of student protests and sit-ins, for the baiting of the pigs. Now they're here, and he's bringing out matching teaspoons. Times change.

In the living room, he finds the seating arrangements have changed too. Stewie and Vicky are on the sofa, and Naylor and Hagen both have dining chairs. The scene looks cramped, unnatural, like a Christmas visit from distant relatives, except that Stewie and Vicky look self-consciously vulnerable in their night-clothes. Stewie is swamped by that dressing gown he never wears; it makes him look small, and Paul feels suddenly protective towards them both. Vicky's hair is a pillow-ruffled mess, and he knows

when she looks in a mirror she'll be mortified, especially since the policewoman's casual up-do is designed to look smart come hell or high water, a style which could never be out of place.

He puts the tray down on the coffee table, and channelling his mother again, wonders if he ought to have brought biscuits. Stewie might have appreciated them. Then he glances at his son and realises the boy is scared. The last thing he'll be thinking of is biscuits.

'Help yourselves,' says Paul, and bypasses the armchair to sit next to Stewie on the sofa. Stewie seems to want him close, and immediately moves over to make room.

Hagen is smiling at Stewie, but his smile looks contrived as a warm-up technique, a ploy to facilitate a quick pick of Stewie's brain. Naylor takes a mug, spoons in sugar and stirs. She seems very interested in her tea and uninterested in Stewie, but Paul knows that's an act to take the pressure off his son.

Naylor lays the teaspoon back on the tray and sips her drink.

'So we just need you to tell us exactly what happened when you left school,' Hagen is saying. 'Do you know what time it was when you left?'

No chance, thinks Paul.

'Not really,' says Stewie.

'About what time do you think it was, Stewie?' puts in Naylor. 'What would you guess?'

'After rugby practice.'

'They usually finish about five,' says Vicky.

'So is that what time it was?' asks Naylor. 'You finished rugby practice at the usual sort of time?'

Stewie shrugs.

'Who takes rugby practice?' asks Hagen. 'Which teacher?'

'Mr Griffiths.'

Hagen produces a notebook and pen. He writes something down and leaves his notebook open on his knee, positioned so he's the only one who can read it.

'What did you do when you finished practice?' asks Naylor.

Painstakingly, she prises the minutiae of twenty-five minutes from

Stewie: the lost boot, the newsagent's and what they bought, the goodbye at the bus stop.

'Did you see anyone you know?'

'No.'

'Did anyone speak to you?'

'The shopkeeper.'

'What did he say?'

'He told us how much to pay.'

'That's all?'

Stewie nods.

'Was there anyone else in the shop?'

'There was a man with tattoos. He was bald.'

'What kind of tattoos were they? Can you describe them?'

'He had a snake on the back of his hand.'

'And on the way to the bus stop, did you see any cars you recognised? Any friends or neighbours going by?'

Stewie thinks, and shakes his head.

'Thanks, Stewie,' says Naylor. 'You've been a real help. Just one last question, for now. Did Evan seem OK to you? Was anything bothering him, any trouble at school, anything like that?'

The living room door opens, and there, blinking away sleep in his dinosaur onesie, is George. He looks around in bewilderment, then frowns at his mother.

'Mum, what's going on?'

Vicky jumps up and grabs his hand.

'Back to bed, Georgie,' she says. 'This is a grown-up thing.'

'But Stewie's here.'

'He's older than you. Excuse us.'

She leads him from the room. As they go up the stairs, George is still protesting his exclusion.

Naylor smiles at Stewie.

'So, you were telling us about Evan. Does he have any worries? Any trouble with bullies, anyone who's been picking on him, maybe?'

Paul is pleased she's using the present tense.

Stewie pulls a face and shrugs.

‘I don’t think so,’ he says.

There seems no more to be said. From upstairs, they hear Vicky and George begin to argue.

Naylor reaches forward, picks up her mug of almost-cold tea and drinks down what’s left.

Hagen puts away his notebook.

‘I think that’s it for now, Mr Wareham,’ he says.

Naylor finds a business card, and hands it to Paul.

‘We’ll need Stewie to come into the station and make a statement,’ she says, ‘especially a description of the tattoos. We have specially trained staff to interview minors, and you can stay with him. It’s all low-key, nothing to worry about, but as soon as possible, if you don’t mind.’

As the police officers stand to leave, Stewie puts the question Paul didn’t dare ask.

‘Where’s Evan? What’s happened to him?’

Naylor smiles.

‘I don’t think he’s far away,’ she says. ‘We’ve got lots of people looking for him. Try not to worry.’

Paul closes the door behind them. As he follows Stewie upstairs, the Peugeot’s engine starts, and the car drives away. With the streets deserted, they hear it for a surprisingly long time.

Paul watches his son discard the despised dressing gown and climb back into bed. He kisses Stewie’s forehead and strokes his hair, feeling, for some reason, close to tears.

‘Night night, son.’

As he’s about to close the bedroom door, Stewie says, ‘Dad.’

‘What’s up?’

‘I think I should have waited with Evan to make sure he got on the bus.’

Paul hesitates.

‘Don’t worry about it,’ he says. ‘Don’t go thinking anything’s your fault. Probably someone gave him a lift.’

He wants to unsay the words the moment they’re out. As Paul shuts Stewie into the darkness of his bedroom, both father and son are

considering the same uncomfortable thought. Maybe someone did offer Evan a lift, but what if it was an offer Evan wasn't allowed to refuse?

Hagen's observing the speed limits, even though they're alone on the suburban streets. Naylor watches the needle on the speedometer, and never sees it rise above 33 mph.

She isn't keen to return to Evan's family home. The mother's distress is harrowing.

Hagen flicks on the indicator to turn right. Rules are rules, and it doesn't matter to him that it's not necessary, that there's no one to see it. The radio on the dashboard crackles and falls silent.

'So what do you think?' asks Hagen. 'If you were the betting kind, where would you be putting your money?'

Naylor glances across at him.

'Do you mean, based on my years of experience?'

'Based on past outcomes.'

'Decent family, no history of running away, no known problems at school. Put two and two together, I'd say we have reason to worry.'

They're turning into the Ferrerses' cul-de-sac, all post-war semis, the front gardens mostly sacrificed for block-paved parking. Outside Evan's house, the vehicles are all police-owned, but that will soon change, when the media arrive.

Hagen pulls in behind a patrol car. There's a uniformed policewoman standing under the Ferrerses' porch-light.

'Goes without saying, that stays between you and me,' says Naylor, getting out of the car.

THREE

12 October Yorkshire

Jack Ferrers has been an early riser from being a boy, and even with most of the livestock sold and the workload not a third of what it was, old habits die hard. Jack likes to be up by five, even though this time of year there's still a good while before sunrise and there's nothing to see from the windows but the dark on the fells. In the long weeks of autumn and winter, all Jack does in the pre-dawn hours is make tea and read yesterday's paper.

The farmhouse at Ainsclough Top is three hundred years old, and cold seeps through every wall. In a while, Jack will bring in coal and light the range, so the place is warming through before Dora wakes, because Dora feels the cold these days, in a way she never used to.

Outside, Millie the border collie is restless, dragging her chain backwards and forwards across the stone-flagged yard. Probably she's scented a fox sniffing round the coop, and Jack thinks he'll let her loose a while to see it off.

But then the phone rings. It doesn't ring often, and in the quiet, it's jarring.

He folds the paper, goes out into the hall and picks up the receiver.

'Hello?'

'Dad? Is that you?'

Jack recognises Matt's voice, though it's different to normal, without its usual cheeriness.

'Don't you know what time it is?' asks Jack. 'You'll wake your mother.'

'Dad.' Matt sounds broken, tearful, and Jack knows there's going to be something bad. He closes his eyes. 'Dad, something's happened to Evan.'

Jack feels the need to sit, but there's no chair. On the side table, alongside the phone, are photographs in frames. There's one of Jack and

Evan down by the beck, Evan a smiling four-year-old with sticklebacks in a jar, his grandpa's hand resting on his head. In the photo, the sun is shining. Outside, Millie begins to bark.

'Dad?'

'I'm here, son.' Overhead, he hears the creak of floorboards, Dora out of bed and coming to see who's on the phone. Jack keeps his voice low. 'Tell me what's happened.'

Matt's voice is unsteady as he tells the news. Jack senses Dora at the head of the stairs, listening, and turns his back so his face will give nothing away. He lets Matt talk, until his son has no more to say.

'What do you want us to do?' asks Jack. 'We'll come down. I'll get Bob Sturgess to keep an eye on this place.'

He listens to Matt give the reasons why his father should stay where he is: the house is full of police and they've been warned to expect the press.

'Whatever you think is best,' says Jack. 'Do you want to talk to your mother?'

There's silence on the line which Jack knows is Matt shaking his head. The stairs creak under Dora's feet.

'You tell her,' says Matt. 'But play it down, Dad.'

Jack has no idea how he would play such a thing down.

'We'll ring you in a couple of hours, then,' he says. 'But you let us know, the second there's any news. The very second, you hear me?'

After he hangs up, he takes a moment to compose himself.

Dora asks, 'Who on earth was that, this time of the morning?'

Jack's heart feels strange. He wonders where he's put his pills.

'Jack? Are you all right?'

'I was making tea,' he says.

She follows him through to the kitchen, tightening the belt on her dressing gown, her worn sheepskin slippers slapping on the cold tiles.

He sits down at the table, motioning her to do the same.

'That was Matt,' he says.

'Matt? What did he want? Is something wrong? You don't look well, Jack. I'll go and get your tablets.'

She moves to get up, but he places his hand over hers to stop her. She

has such small hands, not much bigger than a child's.

'Dora,' he says. 'It's not Matt, it's Evan. They think someone might have taken him.'

Her face takes on an expression he's never seen before, not in all their forty years together. If pressed to give it a name, he would say *stricken*. He tightens his hand on hers, hoping it will help her cope, hoping it will give him strength.

'What do you mean?' she asks. 'Taken him where?'

Jack shakes his head, and realises the hot pressure in his eyes is the smarting of tears. He doesn't want to cry, because it will start Dora off, and he hates it when she cries. Mostly it makes him feel awkward, but on this occasion it would speed the breaking of his heart, and it's too early yet for heartbreak. The police believe there's an excellent possibility of a good outcome, Matt said. They expect Evan to be back home soon, safe and well.

Reminding himself of this, he decides it's what he'll tell Dora.

'They don't know where he is, that's the truth of it. He didn't come home from school yesterday. He may have gotten on the wrong bus and be lost somewhere, or had an accident. They're checking the hospitals, as you'd expect.'

'Yesterday? You mean he's been gone all night?'

Jack nods. He's controlling the pressure in his eyes, but now he finds his chin is trembling.

'The police are there, at the house. Matt says it's going to be on the news.'

'What news?' Jack gives no answer. 'You mean the national news, don't you?'

She doesn't wait for his response but buries her face in her hands and begins to rock.

'Our boy!' she moans. 'Our poor, precious boy!'

Jack puts an arm around her back and, now she isn't looking at him, lets the tears fall. Several leave dark spots on his trousers.

'It might be nothing, love,' he says, pulling her close. He kisses the top of her head, the grey curls which used to be mahogany brown, and breathes in the smell of lemon shampoo. 'He might easily turn up yet, right as rain.'

There might have been a falling out, and he's packed his bags to give his mum and dad a fright.'

Dora's clinging to him in a way she hasn't done for years. There's a handkerchief embroidered with violets in the pocket of her robe. She pulls it out and blows her nose.

'What shall we do, Jack?'

Jack kisses her hair again.

'Matt says the police think if he's run away, there's a chance he might aim for here, so we're best to sit tight. He doesn't want us to go down there right away. He says they've got all on coping with the police and the reporters. Sounds like they've a house full. If he wants us, he'll let us know.'

'We should put the telly on,' says Dora. 'The news'll be on at six.'

'Matt thinks it'll upset you.'

'That boy.' Dora wipes her eyes. 'I'm tougher than he thinks.'

Jack stands.

'I'll make a fresh pot and get the fires lit,' he says. 'If Evan does turn up here, he'll doubtless be chilled to the bone. And you'd better get yourself dressed, love, and put your baking apron on. You know if he comes, the boy'll be wanting your cake.'

FOUR

‘It’s just routine,’ says the policewoman.

She’s balancing on the edge of the sofa as if she’s afraid someone might catch her sitting down, an attractive girl but young and slight, not someone Matt thinks would be of any use in the face of town centre drunks or civil disobedience. But she’s a good choice for keeping him and Claire confined to the lounge, if only because he thinks she’ll crumble if he shouts at her.

Matt has seen overnight changes in Claire, but none so big as in himself. The calm, reasonable man he believed himself to be has been shoved aside, making way for Matt the volatile bully, who rants and yells and can pretend no respect for those trying to help him and his family. But this new persona exhausts him, his mouthy outbursts a bigger drain of energy than the worry and no sleep, and he’s glad to lapse for a time into meek compliance.

What good is shouting anyway? If they have boxes to tick, let them get on with it. Overhead, men are moving about, opening wardrobes, shifting furniture. A few moments ago, he heard the catch on the loft-hatch snap back and the rattle of the ladder descending. Now there’s a heavy foot on the lowest rung.

‘You’d be surprised how many missing kids are found at home. Under beds, in garages and sheds. It’s always the first place we look.’

The policewoman looks slightly embarrassed at the banality of what she’s just said.

Claire’s eyes drift to the window and the improbable scene outside, a jam of police cars and vans with satellite dishes and broadcaster logos on their sides. She’s holding an empty mug, and her hand is shaking. As she places the mug on a side table, she hears the click of Evan’s bedroom door opening, and sweet relief floods through her.

She starts to get to her feet, but the policewoman shakes her head sadly, and instead of Evan’s soft tread, there’s the sound of a hefty male in the room above.

Claire sinks back on to the sofa and feels the prick of fresh tears. As she fumbles for a tissue, a trio of polished TV presenters are laughing on the drive, and as she watches, one of them breaks away from the group, walks brazenly to the window and puts his face to the glass.

Noticing Claire's startled expression, the policewoman crosses the room.

'Let's close this, shall we?' she says, and lowers the blind.

The lounge is suddenly in twilight. The policewoman turns on a lamp.

In the attic, someone's making their way cautiously across the ceiling beams.

As if I wouldn't know if my own son were up there, thinks Matt.

'Soon be done,' says the policewoman. 'Can I get you another cup of tea?'

At Ashridge police station, Hagen has asked DS Dallabrida to sit in. Dallabrida has a dangerous demeanour bred in a streetwise background, enhanced by his massive gym-junkie build from protein-packing and lifting weights. It's a look which tends to encourage suspects to co-operate sooner rather than later. He closes the door behind them, still smiling at some uniform lads' banter.

He and Hagen pull chairs up to the table, and Hagen opens up his file. Dallabrida switches on the tape, declares the date and time, and names those present in the room.

Mr Griffiths has been here a while now, alone with a cup of coffee and a promise he won't be kept long. He called in, as requested, on his lunch hour, expecting to be back on the playing fields by two. He's still wearing sweats and trainers, and faced with suits, ties and close haircuts – Dallabrida's tailoring is almost suave – he feels somehow outranked.

'You do not have to say anything,' says Dallabrida. 'But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. Do you wish to have a lawyer present?'

Mr Griffiths looks alarmed.

'What's going on?' he asks. 'Is all this really necessary? I've come here voluntarily. You said an informal chat.'

‘We like to keep things on the level,’ says Dallabrida. ‘It’s for your protection, more than ours. You’re not likely to suffer any police brutality with the tape running, are you?’

‘I hope I’m not likely to suffer police brutality anyway,’ says Mr Griffiths, catching Hagen’s eye. ‘Not in this day and age.’

Dallabrida’s smile broadens.

‘Not our style, mate,’ he says.

‘Shall we crack on, then?’ asks Hagen. ‘Thanks for coming down. We wanted to talk to you, as I’m sure you know, in connection with the disappearance of Evan Ferrers. We believe you were one of the last people to see him. One of the last adult people, that is.’

‘Of course.’

Hagen runs the point of his pen down the form which is the topmost piece of paper in his file.

‘Can you just confirm your full name, Mr Griffiths?’

‘Robert. Robert Griffiths.’

‘Date of birth?’

‘Twelve, seven, seventy-two.’

The tip of Hagen’s pen moves back up the form. Dallabrida’s smile has disappeared.

‘It says here,’ says Hagen, ‘your full name is Quentin Robert Griffiths. Quentin. That’s an unusual name.’

‘My mother had delusions of grandeur on my behalf.’

‘So why didn’t you say your name is Quentin?’

‘Would you?’

‘The thing is, Mr Griffiths, you’re a person of interest to us because you’ve been on our radar before.’ He begins to sift through his papers, as if searching for the document he requires. ‘Seven years ago. A complaint was made by a pupil, one David Sellers. He said you tried to touch him up in the changing rooms. Would you like to tell us about that?’

Dallabrida folds his arms. Mr Griffiths’s expression is one of incredulity.

‘You have to be joking!’ he says. ‘For Christ’s sake! A person of interest? It was all trumped up, all crap! You established that at the time.’

‘Actually, it was before my time. So why don’t you tell us what happened?’

Mr Griffiths colours.

‘I’d had a bit of a fling with the boy’s mother. He didn’t like it when I dropped her.’

Dallabrida raises his eyebrows in exaggerated surprise.

‘So do you make a habit of having relations with pupils’ mothers?’

‘Once or twice.’

It’s difficult to say if Dallabrida is admiring or disapproving, but Hagen’s face is stern.

‘Some parents would take a dim view of that,’ he says. ‘They might be led to think you’re a man without too many scruples. I’ve got someone out looking for David Sellers, so we’ll see what he has to say when we track him down. In the meantime, I expect we could drum up another cup of coffee while you wait.’

‘If you’re lucky, we might even throw in a couple of Hobnobs,’ says Dallabrida.

‘I want a lawyer,’ says Mr Griffiths.

In the classroom, Naylor is seated at the teacher’s desk. The playground shouts and screams beyond the window take her back years, but there’s no smell of chalk and over-boiled dinners here. Times have moved on, to whiteboards and interaction, and the sandwich she bought for lunch in the canteen earlier was grilled chicken on ciabatta.

The man coming through the doorway is dressed casually, without the tie the headmaster insists male teaching staff should wear. His beard is blurred into several days’ growth of stubble, and his crooked teeth are ugly and discoloured as a smack addict’s. But he seems pleasant enough, diffident, eager to please, softly spoken.

‘I hope I’m not late?’ he says.

Naylor glances at her watch, and at the list of school staff she’s been given.

‘Mr Prentice?’

‘That’s right, that’s me. Gary Prentice. Gareth at birth. People like to shorten it to Gary.’

‘Have a seat, Mr Prentice.’

He lays a hoop of keys on the desk and sits down in front of her, smiling unselfconsciously, in spite of his teeth.

‘Thanks for taking the time to talk to me.’ Naylor turns to a fresh page in her notebook and writes Gary Prentice’s name at the head of the sheet. ‘It’s just routine. We’re talking to everyone on the school staff as part of our enquiries into Evan Ferrers’s disappearance.’

‘It’s very unsettling, especially for the parents,’ says Prentice. ‘I don’t have children myself, but I’m sure it must be a worry.’

Naylor looks at him.

‘A little more than worrying, I should say.’

‘I’m sorry, yes, of course. It’s hard to know what word to use.’

Naylor glances at the notes she’s made on her list.

‘Mr Mullis tells me you haven’t been caretaker here very long.’

‘About six months.’

‘And before that?’

‘I was at a school in Guildford.’

‘And you left there why?’

‘I was made redundant. The school I was at merged with another, and they already had a caretaker. He had longer tenure than me, so I was out. I was lucky to find this job. Good school, nice area.’

Naylor makes a line of notes.

‘Were you in school yesterday evening?’

‘I was,’ says Prentice. ‘There’s no time off for me, in term time.’

‘And did you see Evan and Stewie Wareham at all?’

‘I saw them on their way out. They were the last to leave. Everyone else was long gone, so I chivvied them a bit, encouraged them on their way, you know? I was waiting to lock the front doors so I could go up to the second floor and check on the cleaners.’

Naylor doesn’t look up from the notes she’s writing.

‘They were lucky you knew they were still in the building. If everyone else was long gone.’

Now she glances up, and sees Prentice shift in his chair.

‘When I say everyone, I mean the other rugby lads,’ he says. ‘There

were a couple of members of staff still to leave. Mr Mullis always stays late, but I knew Bob Griffiths would be going soon. I was waiting for him when I heard the boys coming down the hall. Youngsters never talk quietly, do they? Anyway, if they had been locked in, it would only have cost them a few minutes. There's a button to push which activates my beeper. They'd have had to wait for me coming back downstairs, that's all.'

Naylor nods her understanding.

'Can you recall seeing anything unusual? People hanging around who shouldn't have been here?'

Prentice shakes his head.

'I'm sorry, no. I'm not much use to you, am I?'

'If you think of anything, you will let me know?' says Naylor.

'Of course I will,' says Prentice. 'Anything at all I can do to help.'

At 3.50 p.m., Hagen takes a call from a detective constable. He listens to what's being said, then goes to find Dallabrida, who's watching yesterday's CCTV footage from cameras in the Belmont Road area.

'Any joy?' asks Hagen, and Dallabrida shakes his head.

'Nothing so far,' he says. 'There's nothing on the bus stop itself. I'm looking for anything of interest but it's hard to know exactly what that would be.'

'Will you do me a favour?' asks Hagen. 'Will you go and tell Robert Griffiths he's free to go?'

'Has his story checked out?'

'Seems so. They tracked down David Sellers working in an optician's on the high street, and he was happy enough to confirm his accusation of assault was malicious.'

'You can ruin a man's career doing things like that,' says Dallabrida.

'Now we've done him no favours, keeping him here all afternoon,' says Hagen. 'So the sooner he's off the premises, the better.'

'What about the CCTV?'

'Come back to that when you're done with Griffiths. I'll give you a hand with it when I get back.'

'I'm on my way,' says Dallabrida.

'Is there somewhere private we can go, Mr Jadoon?' asks Hagen.

The newsagent lets out a sigh. He has the wiriness of a man who never sits, and the wariness of one who isn't trusting. His quilted jacket's fastened to the neck, and standing near the counter, Hagen understands why. Constant opening and closing of the door lets in the cold air, melding damp leaves and wet tarmac with the shop smells of newsprint and bruised apples.

'Normally, of course I would be glad to help,' says Jadoon. 'But this is my busiest time of day. Maybe you could come back later?' His eyes flicker to the CCTV monitor, where a woman out of sight from the counter is checking the price of canned spaghetti. 'The schoolkids will be in soon, and I need eyes in the back of my head. They rob me blind, and – no offence – but you and your colleagues, you do very little to help businessmen like me.'

'I'm sure you can appreciate this is an urgent matter,' says Hagen. 'A boy is missing, and we're very concerned for his safety. Isn't there someone who can help out for a few minutes?'

Jadoon mutters something in a language Hagen doesn't know, and goes to a door behind the counter. He calls out a name, and when a woman answers, beckons Hagen forward, stepping back himself to allow his wife to take his place.

In the back room, Jadoon motions Hagen to an armchair, and sits down facing him. As Hagen takes out his notebook, Jadoon's looking round him, into the shop.

'Do you remember two boys who came in yesterday afternoon?' asks Hagen. 'Later than the usual time for the schoolkids, somewhere around five?'

Jadoon shrugs.

'I must be honest with you, it's hard for me to remember specifically. So many of them come in here, different sizes, different ages, same clothes.'

'We have a statement from the boy who was with Evan who remembers a man who was in here at the same time. Bald head, a snake tattoo on his hand. Do you remember him?'

Jadoon considers.

'Yes, I think I do. A big man. He bought milk.'

'Do you know him? Have you seen him before?'

Jadoon looks doubtful. There's a rush of noise from the shop, the chatter of the first of the schoolchildren.

'I couldn't say for sure. We get a lot of passing traffic, people who come in only once and then never again. Certainly he's not what I would call a regular.' Jadoon rises from his chair. 'I'm sorry, I have to go. My wife won't cope alone.'

'Just a couple more questions,' Hagen persists. 'Was there anyone else here at the shop yesterday afternoon, anyone else who might have seen the boys?'

'Yesterday?' Jadoon shakes his head. 'Not yesterday, no. I was here by myself.'

'We'll talk again, then, when you're not so busy.' Hagen gets to his feet. 'We'll be needing a copy of your CCTV, so please be sure the recording stays intact. I'll send someone over to pick it up.'

'The CCTV? Why?'

Hagen's eyebrows lift.

'For obvious reasons, I'd have thought, Mr Jadoon. The man with the tattoo must be on there, along with Evan Ferrers. It could be critical to the investigation. Let me give you my card. We'll be in touch to fix an appointment for you to come down to the station and make a formal statement.'

'Why a formal statement? Like I said, I don't remember very much about them, not specifically.'

'But you remember the man with the tattoos,' says Hagen. 'We'll be in touch. Thanks very much for your time.'

No news is not good news.

As far as the general public is aware, there have been no sightings of Evan, nothing to go on at all. After tea, with a subdued Stewie shut away in his room and George happily watching *Charlie and Lola*, Vicky thinks she should ring Claire. Then she changes her mind. In the fridge, the remains of last night's Pinot Grigio are well-chilled and tempting, and enough to fill a large glass. By the time she's drunk a third of the wine, she feels braver, picks up the phone and dials.

The man who answers isn't Matt. Vicky asks for Claire, and the man

asks her who she is. Vicky describes herself as a friend of the family. She hears muffled voices down the line, the wind-in-microphone noises of a hand covering the receiver. Then the man takes his hand from the mouthpiece.

‘She’ll call you back,’ he says.

The evening goes by. Vicky bathes George and puts him to bed, finishes the Pinot Grigio and opens another bottle. Paul arrives home just after nine, exhausted and full of traveller’s tales of tailbacks and motorway closures. He’s eaten a sandwich and doesn’t want dinner, but he opens a beer, slips off his shoes and flops down on the sofa. Grabbing the remote, he skips through the channels to the second half of a football match.

‘You should go and talk to Stewie,’ says Vicky.

‘How is he?’

‘He’s a bit withdrawn.’ She’s about to say more – how Stewie didn’t eat much this evening, how he wasn’t full of his usual chatter when he came home from school – but the phone rings. Paul picks it up from the sofa arm, glances at it and holds it out to Vicky. The Ferrerses’ number is showing in the display.

She takes the phone from him and lets it ring. And ring. By the time she presses the answer button, the caller’s gone.

She and Paul look at each other.

‘I don’t know what to say to her,’ says Vicky. ‘What can I say that won’t sound inadequate?’

She presses the dial button and hears the dual tone which means there’s a message. She puts the phone on speaker, so Paul can listen too.

‘Hi, Vicky, it’s Claire.’

And it is Claire’s voice, but the confident, sometimes strident woman it belongs to has been replaced by a new Claire, who speaks hesitantly, almost timorously, with a vulnerability which brings a lump to Vicky’s throat.

Claire starts with niceties – thanks for ringing, hope Stewie’s OK – then stumbles over a few words Paul and Vicky can’t make out.

‘The thing is,’ she says next, ‘they’ve asked me to ask you if he’ll do it. And you know I would never ask such a thing, only things here are . . .’ There’s a laugh, bitter and crazy. ‘Unsurprisingly, things here are not great.

And I know it's a huge, huge favour, but Vicky . . . Vicky, for Evan's sake, please say yes.'

FIVE

18 October

The morning of the reconstruction – which will begin one week to the day, hour and minute of Evan’s disappearance – is clear and cold. Two hours after the time she’d usually arrive at work, Claire is lying in bed, looking out at the sky. Downstairs, Matt’s yelling at the Family Liaison Officer, a well-meaning man who seems content to be punchbag for them both. Tears and anger run off his back, and even the most stinging tirades on police incompetence are met with expressions of sympathy, and fresh mugs of tea.

But this morning, the Liaison Officer’s really got off on the wrong foot. He’s let Matt know the reconstruction won’t be screened until it’s shown on *Crimewatch*, five days from now.

‘If that’s not an admission of defeat, I don’t know what is!’ Matt is shouting. ‘Don’t think I’m going to let you lot drag your feet until Monday! I want my boy home long before then!’

Claire, too, aches to have Evan home. Her waking hours are a torment, yet sleep feels like a betrayal. What normal parent sleeps while their child is lost? She catches herself making observations on her own behaviour, quite able to distinguish her rational from her irrational thoughts. She wonders if she might, in spite of herself, be losing hope. The past day or so, increasingly the possibility slithers through her mind that Evan might be dead. On that detached, removed level, she notes her biggest concern for him, dead or alive, is broadly the same: she wants him to be warm. What would be most unbearable, what she could never begin to forgive, would be if his body were left in the open, exposed to the cold, to foxes and scavenging crows.

As Matt continues to berate the Liaison Officer, Claire talks in her head to her newly discovered best friend, God. *Please God*, she prays, *let him not have suffered. And please God, let them give him a blanket, and cover my*

baby's face.

It's a bad day to be out. Jack Ferrers pauses by the yard gate, wind worrying his white hair, and watches the squalls of rain blowing in over Blackmire Ridge. There's a view from here right down the lane, as far as the eye can follow it, to the beck turn.

No one is there.

He walks slowly up to the home field, his boots squelching in the mud. Birds have already stripped the berries from the scrawny hawthorn trees, sign of a hard winter to come. The ewes are sheltering along the bases of the grey stone walls, and when they hear the latch click on the gate, they raise their heads from the thin grass and run bleating towards him, following him to the tumbledown store at the field's top end. Jack hauls a sack of sugar-beet feed from the store, and tosses a couple of handfuls to the ewes before filling two buckets. He carries the buckets to the middle of the field, scattering the feed as broadly as he can. The ewes are looking well, ready for the tup in another week or two.

In the farmhouse porch, he pulls off his boots. He was generous this morning with the coal when he banked up the range, and the kitchen is warm. If the boy walks up here from the village, he'll be frozen with the cold.

One week now. The cake Dora made for Evan is going stale, but it doesn't feel right to eat it. He boils the kettle and makes a pot of tea. When he carries a cup up to Dora, he takes her a plate of biscuits, leaving Evan's cake untouched in its tin.

Claire wants to be sick.

The fear of going out there is making her feel faint, but she thinks she can cope with that; she's been living her life in a blurred light-headedness ever since Evan didn't come home.

But throwing up live on TV is something else. Maybe she should find the toilets and take care of it now.

She's left it too late. A girl wearing headphones comes through the door between them and the room where the press conference is scheduled to start. There's a blast of conversation before the door closes, and a glimpse of rows of seated people.

A lot of people. All waiting for them.

‘Hold my hand,’ murmurs Matt.

She wraps her fingers around his and finds him squeezing, as hard as he did the day Evan was born, a tiny, angry Evan, wrinkled and clench-fisted, screaming his fury at being forced into the world. Claire remembers the first moments of holding him in her arms, how he lit a light of purpose inside her: the only thing that mattered was loving and caring for her son. Over the years, that light dimmed, shadowed by cravings for free time, me-time, a career and a life beyond being Evan’s mum. False grails, she sees now, and fool’s gold. In her life there’s only one true light, and if it goes out, what’s the point of carrying on?

‘Are you OK?’ asks Matt. His face has grown thin, and he’s aged in the depths of his eyes. The confident, I’ve-got-this Matt she knew has disappeared, and a man she barely knows stands alongside her, waiting to be told what to do.

The policeman in charge – Chief Inspector Campbell – is relaxed as he walks towards them, wearing a smile intended to put them at ease. The pressure from Matt’s hand lessens, but he doesn’t let go.

‘Ready?’ asks Campbell, and – even though she isn’t and never will be – in the face of his authority, Claire nods yes.

‘You’ll be fine,’ says Campbell. ‘I’ll take all the questions. All you have to do is read out your statement. If it gets too much for you, Matt, you take over. Just remember you’re doing this for Evan.’

As the door opens, Campbell leads the way, and two PR people, a man and a woman, follow behind. Matt squeezes Claire’s hand again, and leads her through the door, into a dazzling starburst of camera flashes.

The PR people usher Claire and Matt into chairs. Static LED lights blaze in their eyes, obscuring the room beyond. Campbell and the PR people take their seats. A screen behind them shows a photofit of the tattooed man drawn from Stewie’s description, alongside a blown-up artist’s impression of the snake tattoo on his hand.

Claire moves her head, and finds beyond the lights she can see the crowd craning for a view of her, fascinated by her devastation and despair.

Under the table, Matt’s hand grasps hers.

Campbell begins to speak confidently and concisely, giving the known facts of Evan's disappearance. As he's talking, Claire notices a presenter who's been a regular on her front lawn, a face she recognises as Dale Vardy from BBC South.

And then the Chief Inspector says, 'Claire?'

Her stomach lurches. Matt lets go of her hand, as Claire feels a deep blush spread into her face.

Her statement is on the table in front of her, printed in a large font, double spaced and easy to read as a kindergarten story. The room is silent, and as she picks up the sheet of paper, her microphone broadcasts its rustle around the room.

She clears her throat. The sound of it seems everywhere.

The PR woman leans across to her and touches her arm.

'Take your time, Claire,' she says.

Claire stares out at the room.

They're here to help, she tells herself, and starts to read.

'Our son Evan . . .' Her voice sounds odd, unexpected, nothing like the voice she knows from her own head. Disconcerted, she stops.

She begins again.

'Our son Evan is a bright, kind, funny boy . . .'

The truth of these words is a punch to the heart.

'Kind and funny,' she says again, though they're not repeated in the script. 'Wherever he is, we know he just wants to come home.' The last word is unclear, hampered by the misery swelling her throat, so she says it again, more forcefully.

'Home.'

She looks out at the BBC presenter, but he's staring at his knees. Few of her audience are actually looking at her.

'Somebody, somewhere, knows where Evan is. If that's you, please, please let him go.'

There are only two more lines, but Claire abandons them to finish in her own words.

'We're begging you, just tell us where he is. Evan, my darling, we love you so much. Just hang in there. We love you.'

She stops.

There are whole seconds of silence before Campbell picks up the baton, turning to the photofit of the tattooed man.

‘The man behind me is a person of interest in this investigation, and we’re asking members of the public who may know him to come forward. His tattoo is very distinctive, and the message we want to get out there is if anyone’s seen it, please don’t hesitate, do the right thing and pick up the phone. We’ll be staging a full reconstruction of Evan’s abduction at five p.m. this afternoon and we’ll hope to see all of you there. Any questions?’

Hands go up around the room, but Dale Vardy speaks up without waiting for Campbell to make his choice.

‘Are you still treating this as a missing persons case, Chief Inspector? Realistically, what are the chances now of finding Evan alive?’

With Matt and Claire in the room, the insensitivity of his question evokes a collective intake of breath. Claire feels Matt flinch. The PR woman scowls, and her colleague looks to see who’s spoken and makes a note of his name.

‘We have no reason whatever at this stage to believe Evan is not very much alive and that is how we shall continue to investigate his abduction,’ says Campbell. ‘We fully anticipate that this afternoon’s reconstruction will bring in new information, and I have a team standing by to act on any verifiable leads to ensure he’s reunited with his family in the shortest possible timeframe.’

As Campbell’s speaking, Claire looks over at Vardy, and when she sees he isn’t pleased, the dawning realisation hurts. These people are not Claire’s allies and their interests do not align with hers and Matt’s. For them, it will be a better outcome if Evan’s dead; there is, after all, far more media mileage in a lonely woodland burial than a joyous welcome home. A murdered boy is a drama that can run and run: manhunt, arrest, court case, with countless cash-ins – books, biographies, documentaries – in the years to come.

What matters to these people is the story.

Campbell is summing up.

‘Thank you all for coming. There are handouts by the door. Any further

questions, you'll find contact details on there.'

Campbell and the PR people lead them out. Claire's legs are unsteady, and she leans on Matt for support.

'I think that went well,' says Campbell, smiling at Claire.

As the door closes behind them, the LED lights go out.

For the reconstruction, they've brought in a boy from another school. His name is Nick, and from certain angles he looks disturbingly like Evan. Stewie's finding the whole thing very strange, like a weird instance of déjà vu, but déjà vu's what it's all about. Nick's there to prod people into remembering.

They're ready to start, but they're not starting from the beginning, not what Stewie thinks of as the beginning. Stewie thinks they should start with the lost boot, because that's what made Evan miss the bus. But they say, *What's the point? There's no one to remember that, except you two. We'll take it from the moment you left the changing rooms.*

So Stewie and Nick start at the changing-room door, and head down the corridor, past the trophy cabinets and the photographs of boys who are old men now. Nick's talking about Man U, and Stewie decides he quite likes him. Then he feels guilty because it should be Evan he's with, and he sends a mental apology for being disloyal.

They reach the main entrance and go outside, passing Mr Prentice with his keys. *Exactly like you did seven days ago*, they keep saying, but it's not at all the same. That day the car park was almost empty; today there are TV cameramen, people with microphones, photographers, police. Stewie sees his mum and dad, and Evan's dad, and the headmaster Mr Mullis, and he feels self-conscious and embarrassed, and knows his face is red.

They walk down the road to the newsagent's, and from somewhere they've conjured a man who looks uncannily like the man who was buying milk, with a mocked-up tattoo just as Stewie described it. Someone hands Nick a can of Fanta and Stewie's given a packet of crisps he really doesn't feel like eating. For Evan's sake, he eats them regardless.

It isn't until they reach the bus shelter that Stewie discovers the biggest discrepancy in the reconstruction is his own state of mind. When Stewie said goodbye to Evan a week ago, his mood was light, his conscience

untroubled, but as he leaves Nick to wait alone for whatever comes next, he feels like the worst kind of traitor. Remembering his instructions, he follows the trail of his own walk home, leaden-hearted with the weight of his remorse.

SIX

24 October

‘What’s the news, Brad?’ asks Naylor. The morning after the *Crimewatch* broadcast, Hagen looks weary, with a pallor induced by too much coffee and junk food and no fresh air. ‘Isn’t there a bed somewhere calling your name?’

‘It’s calling louder than you can possibly imagine,’ says Hagen, ‘but there’s too much to do here. Just pour coffee into me and I’ll keep going like the Duracell bunny.’

‘Anything of interest?’

‘Rose is correlating the data from the phone calls, so she can give you a detailed run-down, but by and large, I’d say a very good response. The big question is, will any of it produce anything useful?’

‘We’re back in the headlines, anyway,’ says Naylor, dropping copies of the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* on the desk. ‘That never hurts, does it?’

Hagen picks up the *Mail*, where a photo of a shell-shocked Matt and a tearful Claire covers a third of the front page.

‘Hey, Rachel!’ Dallabrida’s breezing into the office, fresh and cheerful, though Naylor knows he was manning phones last night and won’t have been in bed before the small hours. ‘Message from the front desk. There’s a visitor wants to talk about the Ferrers case, and I think you’ll want to see him. Give me a minute to get my caffeine fix, and I’ll come and keep you company.’

When she enters the interview room, Naylor has to resist punching the air. She chooses the chair by the wall, and Dallabrida sits alongside her, taking his time to make himself comfortable, opening his notebook and finding a pen, all giving Naylor a few moments to study the man sitting opposite.

If he stood up he’d be tall, and he’s powerfully built, stretching the seams on his leather jacket. His head is shaved smooth, and his look should

be threatening, but he's relaxed and smiling at Naylor as if this situation amuses him. His right hand is on the table in front of him, and a snake tattoo is winding round his wrist.

Naylor returns his smile.

'Thanks for coming in, Mr . . . ' She glances across at Dallabrida's notes, where the name is underlined. ' . . . Bryant.'

'That's me, Lee Bryant. I gave my address and all that at the front desk. I've heard you've been looking for me so I thought I'd better come and make myself known, straighten things out. Seems like I've become a national celebrity in my absence.'

'I wouldn't say a celebrity,' says Naylor. 'Do you know why we want to talk to you?'

'It's about that boy who went missing, isn't it? What do they call him, Ewan?'

'Evan.'

'Evan, that's it. I was very sorry to hear about that. Is there any news?'

Naylor sidesteps the question.

'We've been looking for you for some days now, Mr Bryant. Can you explain why you haven't come forward before?'

'Dead simple, I haven't been here. I drive a truck, long distance, Europe mostly, Spain, Germany, places like that. I go all over. This past week I've been to Poland.'

'Poland?' asks Dallabrida. 'What did you take to Poland?'

'A delivery for Tesco,' says Bryant. 'Tesco's huge in Poland. Not many people know that.'

'Don't you have a partner?' asks Naylor. 'No phone calls home, no one to tell you we wanted to speak to you?'

'Not really, no,' says Bryant. 'When I go to interesting places, my missus goes with me. Our kids have all left home, so there's no reason for her to sit at home twiddling her thumbs. We go everywhere together, her and me.'

'You understand you were one of the last people to see Evan before he went missing?' asks Naylor.

'Oh yeah, I get that. I do remember them. One of them was looking at

Sammy here.’ He holds up his right hand, and moves his thumb and forefinger to make the snake’s jaw move. ‘I get a lot of comments about old Sammy. My youngest called him that. I was thinking Satan or Terminator, something really badass, but she made her choice and that was that. He looks scary but he’s harmless, a bit like me. I’m happy to give a statement or whatever, though I don’t know if it’ll help. I just saw them in the shop, that’s all.’

‘We’d appreciate a statement, thank you,’ says Naylor. ‘If you’ve got time, DC Dallabrida can take it now.’

‘Fine by me,’ says Bryant. ‘I watched the reconstruction thing on telly last night, by the way. Gave me a funny feeling to see someone who looked so much like me. But I got to tell you, you missed something out. Well, I say you missed it out. Maybe you did it on purpose. You know what you’re doing, don’t you? Maybe you didn’t think it was important.’

Naylor and Dallabrida stare at him.

‘You didn’t show the van outside the shop, the one making the delivery round the back.’

When Hagen makes his return visit to the newsagent’s, Dallabrida goes along for the ride.

After the morning rush and not yet lunchtime, the shop is quiet. Mr Jadoon is behind the counter, reading a copy of the *Mail*. When he sees Hagen he folds up the newspaper, but doesn’t manage a welcoming smile.

‘Did you see yourself on TV?’ asks Hagen. ‘They did a good job, don’t you think?’

‘My wife and I watched it, yes,’ says Jadoon. ‘I wasn’t featured, only the shop.’

‘Might be good for business,’ says Dallabrida. He picks up a Boost bar, puts it down again and pats his stomach. ‘Better not, eh? I have to watch my figure. Got to keep the ladies happy.’

‘Can I help you with something?’ asks Jadoon. ‘I gave my statement as you asked. I don’t have anything else to say.’

‘It’s about your statement we’re here,’ says Hagen.

‘What about it?’

An elderly man pushes through the shop door, and begins to read the

front pages on the newsstand.

‘We can do this in private, if you’d like,’ says Hagen.

The elderly man picks up a copy of the *Guardian* and crosses to the counter to pay. He asks for twenty Sterling Superkings, and Jadoon slides open the shutter hiding his stock of cigarettes. He hands over the silver and red packet, takes payment and gives change.

‘Thanks, mate,’ he says, as the old man leaves.

‘The thing is,’ says Hagen, ‘when you gave your statement, we think there may have been an omission.’

‘It’s an offence to make a false statement,’ says Dallabrida. ‘Do you want to have a quick think about anything you might have forgotten? Let us give you a clue. It’s got something to do with a van.’

‘A van?’

‘A van that was outside your shop when Evan Ferrers and Stewart Wareham walked in.’

Jadoon drops his head.

‘OK,’ he says, ‘OK. This way.’ He leads them to the back of the shop and takes a bottle of white wine from the chiller. ‘I told my wife it was a terrible idea. She has a cousin in the cash-and-carry trade. I don’t know where they get it from, just that it’s very cheap. It says from France on the bottle but I don’t believe it comes from there.’

Hagen studies the label. It looks genuine, but many fake wines do.

‘How much did you pay for this stuff?’

‘One fifty a bottle. You see, it retails at seven, maybe eight ninety-nine.’

‘And who was driving the van?’

‘I don’t know,’ says Jadoon. ‘I didn’t know him and I didn’t ask. Why would I?’

Dallabrida looks at Hagen and shakes his head.

‘Do you want to tell your wife you’re going out, Mr Jadoon?’ asks Hagen. ‘If you’re going to revise your statement, there’s no time like the here and now.’

SEVEN

29 November

Matt comes into the bedroom quietly, his bare feet padding on the cream carpet, navigating around the bed by the light bleeding around the edge of the door. Since that first night, the landing light's been left on, at first because there were always people in the house: investigators, liaison officers, uniformed officers to keep the press at bay, all well-meaning, all for Claire and Matt's benefit, but all strangers who invaded the sanctity and privacy of their home and left only this bedroom as a refuge from the invasion.

The press were like an army laying siege, so the curtains and blinds remained permanently closed and time went by in a perpetual evening. Claire feels they became like cave dwellers, allergic to the lost daylight, and the first few times she left the house, even in the foggy gloom of autumn, she was bewildered by the abundance of colour, accustomed as she was to the chromatic distortions of fluorescent and energy-saving lightbulbs.

Everyone is gone now. The fickle media circus left first, lured away by other dramas and disasters, rushing away to homes more recently blighted, to fresher tragedies and heartbreaks. When the press struck camp, there was no need for the uniforms to remain, which Claire regretted, a little. Of all the people who were here, she had borne their company most easily, those world-weary men and women who handled pressure with laughter, uncovering rubies of dark humour in the rubble of once-ordinary lives.

Now the house is theirs again, the landing light stays on because neither of them sleep well, and they're often up in the night, easily disturbed by late-returning neighbours, or foxes raiding the bins, even rain on the windows, which always brings Claire back to worrying whether Evan is warm and dry.

Matt's trying not to wake her, but Claire isn't asleep. Matt's been in Evan's room, where he goes often by night, shutting himself in. Sometimes

Claire can hear him sobbing through the wall, and feels the tightness in her throat and the closeness of her own tears, as much for poor Matt's pain as Evan's absence.

Thinking he hasn't disturbed her, Matt creeps into the bed, slipping under his cool side of the duvet. As quietly as he can, he sniffs away the snotty residue of his crying.

Matt suffers from cold feet. Turning over, she moves close to him, puts her warm feet over his and lays her head on his chest. He folds his arm around her shoulder, and there they lie, wide awake, welded together in their heartbreak, neither of them entirely sure they want to see another day.

Stewie has come to hate Wednesdays, Groundhog Day for the day Evan disappeared. Every lesson and every break is part of the countdown to the moment they said goodbye.

On the seventh Wednesday, George is ready early for school, and Vicky allows him ten minutes of *SpongeBob*. George turns up the volume on the TV, and the cartoon voices of Squidward and Plankton are loud through the house.

As Stewie comes down the stairs, George is laughing. Stewie goes straight to the living room, snatches up the remote and mutes the volume.

'For fuck's sake!' he shouts. 'That does my head in!'

George is quickly on his feet, following Stewie and the remote into the kitchen.

'Mum, Mum! Stewie swore!'

Vicky is putting cherry tomatoes into George's lunch box. She looks at Stewie, surprised.

'Did you, Stewie?'

'Oh, for Christ's sake, stop hassling me! Here, snitch.' He skims the remote across the worktop in George's direction, but George isn't quick enough to catch it, and the remote drops to the floor, breaking off its back so the batteries roll loose.

'Pick that up, Stewie,' says Vicky.

'He dropped it.'

'You threw it. What's got into you? Pick that up and get yourself some breakfast. You'll be late.'

Keen to get back to *SpongeBob*, George is reassembling the remote.

‘I’m not going in today,’ says Stewie. ‘I don’t feel well.’

Vicky studies him. Stewie’s pale, but he’s walking and talking, and that makes him fit enough for school.

‘What’s wrong with you?’ she asks.

‘I’ve got a headache. I’m going back to bed.’

‘Don’t be ridiculous. Do you want me to do you some toast?’

‘I’m not being ridiculous!’ Suddenly, Stewie’s yelling. ‘I’ll tell you what’s ridiculous – expecting me to carry on like nothing’s happened! Like I should just let it go that my best mate’s disappeared, and you’re like, that’s a shame, off you go, Stewie, back to that place, day after day after day! And when I get home, nearly every day who’s here but bloody Claire, wanting to talk about him, picking my brain like some weird vulture. I don’t want to talk to her, OK? Why do you even let her in here? Why can’t you just tell her to fuck off and leave me alone?’

‘Claire needs our support, Stewie.’

‘No, *I* need your support, and I need you to keep her away from me! I’m not her fucking son substitute or whatever she thinks I am and I am not going back to that school! Ever!’

There’s a long silence between them, broken when SpongeBob’s voice cuts in from the living room.

Vicky sighs.

‘OK, sweetheart,’ she says. ‘Take the day off. We’ll talk about it when Dad comes home tonight.’

EIGHT

4 January

Evan's room is a dilemma. Despite the time that he's been gone, it's barely been disturbed. In the beginning, a policeman took away his laptop to trawl its depths for undesirables, for virtual contacts who had no business being Evan's 'friends' or visits to chatrooms which exist only for dark purposes. It hasn't been returned, and its place on his cluttered desk remains a hollow. Then they bagged up his comb, the Liaison Officer explaining as Matt stared at him, pale and dismayed, that hair samples were needed to match any remains.

Apart from that, Evan's room is exactly as he left it that morning to come downstairs and eat his breakfast: two slices of toast and honey and a slug of milk from the container, for which – God forgive her – Claire told him off.

His book-bag and his rugby kit were by the door, and he picked them up before submitting to a quick kiss.

'See you later, Mum,' he said, and pulled the door shut behind him, leaving her life.

And she walked indifferent to the kitchen and finished her own breakfast, the last but one meal she ate that isn't ashes in her mouth.

See you later, Mum.

The dilemma lies in the freeze-frame of the room's abandonment: in the balled grey school sock lying by the laundry basket, in the dented pillow and the rumpled bed-sheet, in the smiling Lego fireman on the bookshelf and the Xbox controller waiting to be picked up for the next game.

How long can the room be left before she cleans it? How long before the clothes must be laundered and disposed of, the bed stripped, the Xbox and the Lego packed away?

It has to be done sometime.

Just not today.

Three months after Evan disappeared, hope is dwindling. Costs, however, continue to mount up.

When Naylor and Hagen are summoned upstairs at the end of morning briefing, they have an inkling of what's coming. They've nothing to report but depressing dead ends and trails gone cold.

Chief Inspector Martin Campbell has one of the best offices in the building, with a window and a view of the bus station, but the furniture's no better than anyone else's. Campbell sits behind his cheap desk, leaning back in his faux-leather chair. He's tried to make the place feel like home with photographs of his kids, his son grinning up at the camera from a canoe, his daughter on horseback, jumping a fence of striped poles. Hagen knows Campbell doesn't see his kids much any more, and he suspects the horse-riding and canoeing are paid for by the ex-wife's new man. That's hard to compete with, even on a chief inspector's salary.

'So what's new?' Campbell asks.

The question is rhetorical. Campbell keeps himself up to speed in case of update requests from the Chief Constable, and he already knows that Lee Bryant's trip to Poland checked out with Border Control, and that the potentially interesting *Crimewatch* leads – from Strathclyde to Dorset and the Costa Brava – all came to nothing. He knows there's a prosecution pending for Noah Jadoon and the Manchester cartel who sold him fake alcohol, and that nothing was found on Evan's computer to suggest an intention of running away. He's authorised searches of drains to recover Evan's phone, all of which came back with nothing, and undercover intelligence operatives working to discover the boy's whereabouts have drawn only blanks.

'Not much, Sir,' says Naylor.

'These armed robberies, then,' says Campbell. 'Forensics think the three of them are linked. I want you to see what you can do with them.'

'What about the Ferrers case?' asks Hagen.

'I'm going to have the incident room wound down. It can't be funded indefinitely. Resources are tight, and I don't see we're making any progress. You've just told me you don't have any new angles to pursue.'

Hagen and Naylor are silent.

‘So. I know you’ve done your best, but there comes a time to face the facts. We all know the likelihood is that Evan’s already dead, and probably died within hours of his abduction.’

‘Who’ll tell the parents, Sir?’ asks Hagen.

‘You will,’ says Campbell, looking at Naylor. ‘Of course, let them know our commitment to the case is unchanged. You know what to say.’

‘Shall I tell them resources are tight?’ asks Naylor.

The Chief Inspector seems not to have heard. He looks at Hagen.

‘Let me know how you get on with intelligence on these robberies, Bradley,’ he says.

Naylor’s visit is short, just long enough to deliver the news that Evan’s case is being de-prioritised. She uses the word *reviewed*, but Claire and Matt are not fooled.

As Claire sees her out, Naylor says, ‘We’ll be in touch.’

‘When?’ asks Claire.

Naylor wants to apologise, but that would be an acknowledgement of the truth.

‘Take care of yourselves,’ she says.

When she reaches her car she turns back to wave, but Claire has already gone back inside.

Matt’s standing in the kitchen, looking out at nothing in the garden where the drooping heads of snowdrops are poking through wet grass.

Slowly, Claire goes upstairs. The door to Evan’s bedroom is closed, and when she opens it she makes believe the remnants of the scent of him are hanging in the air.

The Lego fireman is still smiling on the bookshelf; the balled-up school sock is still lying on the floor.

She picks up his pillow and buries her face in it. There’s nothing of him there.

With shaking hands, she begins to strip the bed.

NINE

19 March

It's the last home rugby match of the season, and the Under-Twelves are playing well. Claire knows she shouldn't be there, that she's like Banquo at this feast, but she can't help herself. She's hoping for a momentary illusion, that her mind might conjure a glimpse of him, out there on the field amongst the many bodies so similar to his. She stands under the branches of a sycamore tree in spring-green bud, out of the wind and away from the action, avoiding the other parents for their sakes. The boys have grown over the winter, and she wonders if her boy has grown, too. She closes her eyes and, in amongst the shouts and the blasts on the whistle, tries in vain to hear Evan's voice.

There's a new games master, a much younger man than Mr Griffiths, running up and down the sidelines, energetic and keen. Griffiths is gone, taken early retirement. Stewie's changed schools, had a fresh start. Other people are moving on, getting on with their lives.

If only she could do the same.

The Answer to All Your Prayers

TEN

16 June

Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire

Roy Addesley's old van gets thirsty when it's fully laden and the fuel gauge is showing a red light, so Roy pulls into a BP filling station on the Pontefract road. He and Trevor are talking cricket, specifically Yorkshire's less-than-stellar performance against Nottinghamshire yesterday.

Trevor screws up the paper bag his sandwich came in and drops it into the footwell, amongst the other wrappings from this week's lunches.

'There's not a decent batsman amongst them,' he says. 'No wonder Nottinghamshire hammered them. They got beaten because they played absolute shite.'

Roy lines the van up alongside a pump and turns off the engine. There's the usual run-on before it dies. The van needs work.

'If they'd only got a half-decent captain, it'd help,' Trevor persists.

'You're full of it.' Roy climbs down from the cab. 'You want anything from the shop?'

'If you're buying, I'll have a Coke.'

'I'm not buying, so fetch it yourself.'

Trevor laughs, but his laughter's cut short in Roy's ears when he slams the van door. For once, it's cricketing weather – a hot June day, hottest of the year so far. Roy unscrews the filler cap, fits the nozzle into the tank, and as he's squeezing the trigger and letting the diesel run, he thinks of good things to take his mind off how much this is going to cost him. He thinks of opening the fridge at home and the first taste of a cold lager; he thinks of standing under the running shower, of washing off the plaster-dust and sweat; of sitting for a while in the garden while his missus finishes cooking his tea.

The car that pulls up behind him is an 09-plate Ford Focus in dark

metallic red. Roy glances at it, and sees it's carrying two unremarkable men, the driver in late middle-age and balding, the passenger a redhead of an age to be the driver's son. The younger man appears to be angry, turning round to shout at somebody in the back. But there's no one in the back, as far as Roy can see.

He turns away to watch the pump dials. The Ford's driver takes a few litres of fuel and goes inside to pay. Finally, the nozzle clicks to say the van's tank is full. Roy hangs it up, and the pump motor switches off.

In the relative quiet, he hears noises from the car behind, prolonged pounding coming from the boot. He can hear it clearly, so what's curious to Roy is that the red-haired man in the passenger seat, the one who was angry before, seems not to hear it at all. He's just sitting there, looking at Roy. Inside the shop, the Ford's driver is handing over cash.

Roy moves a couple of steps towards the car. The petrol station isn't busy, and the other motorists filling up are out of earshot. The red-haired man is watching him, and Roy's unsure what to do. He's thinking there might be someone in the boot, but is it really his business? Maybe these two blokes are playing some kind of prank, and that's up to them. But the sun is scorching, and he wouldn't want to be sweltering under hot metal.

The car's driver comes out of the shop, and Roy decides he'll have a quick word, and waits for him to get close. But when the driver notices him, he falters and stands still. Behind him, Roy hears the Ford's passenger door open and slam shut, and the beep as the locks are activated from the key-fob. Then, to Roy's surprise, the driver walks away from him and out of the filling station, followed by his red-headed passenger, who's running to catch up.

Roy shouts after them.

'Oi! 'Scuse me, pal!' But neither man looks back. Instead, they increase their pace, and reach the road. 'Oi! Hold on a minute!'

Roy's shouting draws the attention of the other customers. From inside the shop, the staff peer at him through the window, hoping they're not going to be dealing with some nutter.

Now the two men have taken off, Roy knows something's not right. He hurries round the back of the Focus and shouts across to the cashiers.

‘There’s someone locked in this car! They’ve got someone locked in the boot! Trevor! Trevor, get out here!’

He raps his knuckles on the boot-lid.

‘Hello! Are you OK?’ The pounding from inside the Ford becomes frantic. ‘Don’t worry, pal, we’ll get you out!’

Trevor moves quickly for Trevor, and comes to stand beside Roy. A young man leaves a blue Clio, and runs to join them.

‘They’ve legged it,’ he says. ‘I saw which way they went. Shall I go after them?’

Roy hesitates.

‘Someone should,’ he says. The young man is about the same age as his son, and keen for excitement. ‘But don’t you go taking them on. Just see if you can work out where they’re headed.’

The young man runs back to his car and drives away. A cashier appears in the shop doorway, and when Roy shouts to her to call the police, she hurries back inside and picks up a phone, talking animatedly to her colleagues.

The pounding from inside the car is becoming intermittent, as if whoever’s in there is getting tired. The staff all come outside, and join Roy, Trevor and the other customers by the car’s back end.

‘We should jemmy it,’ someone says to Trevor. ‘Haven’t you got a crowbar in your van?’

‘Fetch the crowbar, Trevor,’ says Roy. But when Trevor brings the tool, Roy’s reluctant.

‘It might just be some prank,’ he says. ‘We should wait for the police.’

‘It might be a long wait,’ says one of the cashiers. ‘Last time we rang them, it was the best part of two hours.’

Roy calls out to whoever’s in the boot.

‘All right, pal. We’re just going to wait for the coppers, then we’ll have you out.’

The young man in the blue Clio returns, and reports that he’s lost the two men, who headed down a one-way street where he couldn’t follow. When a police car pulls on to the forecourt – no great speed, no blue lights – there’s a round of low-key, ironic applause from the shop staff.

The police driver is bent-nosed and built like a boxer; his partner's a woman old enough to have seen it all before, several times over. The policeman accepts Roy's offer of the crowbar, while the policewoman stands, arms folded and silent, to one side.

'We didn't dare do it,' explains Roy. 'Criminal damage and all that. His mates ran off with the keys. Right pair of pricks, on a day like this. Must be like a furnace in there, mustn't it?'

The policeman hooks the crowbar under the lock, leans his weight on it and pops the boot open.

The boy inside blinks at the light. His mouth is sealed with silver duct-tape. He's very thin, and red-faced from the heat, and he's been crying. He's lying on his side, his knees bent into the only position they can be; his nails are long and dirty, and he needs a haircut and a bath. Sizes too small, his clothes don't fit him. His feet are bare, his socks knotted together to tie his wrists.

The policeman is taken aback but keeps his professional demeanour. He reaches out to remove the duct-tape from the boy's mouth, but the boy cowers away.

'Let me do it, Dave,' says the policewoman, as she steps forward. Smiling reassurance, she looks into the boy's eyes. 'Just keep still a minute, love, and I'll take this off.' She picks a corner of the tape to lift it and pulls it from his face as gently as she can. 'Are you all right, love? You look in a bit of a state. How long have you been in here? Shall I give you a hand? Just sit up slowly.' She turns to one of the cashiers. 'Fetch us a bottle of water, will you? And a pair of scissors.'

Slowly, painfully, the boy sits up.

'Take your time, love. Dave,' she says quietly to her colleague, 'I think we're going to need an ambulance. And someone from Social Services.' The policeman steps away and speaks into his radio. The cashier comes running back with scissors and water, and the policewoman carefully cuts the boy's wrists free. He rubs at the welts the bindings have left, then takes the water and drinks down the whole half-litre.

'It doesn't look very comfortable in there,' says the policewoman. 'Do you think you can stand up? Lean on me, and let's get you out.'

Stiffly, the boy swings his legs over the boot-sill, and rests his dirty feet on the rear bumper. The policewoman pulls on his arms and raises him up, and he jumps clumsily down from the boot on to the concrete standing, staggering as he lands.

‘You don’t look very well, sweetheart,’ says the policewoman. ‘Just sit yourself down there a minute, and put your head between your legs.’

The boy sits cross-legged on the concrete, hiding his face on his knees, and the policewoman crouches at his side. She puts a caring arm around his skinny shoulders. Through his shirt, she can see the nodules of his spine.

‘Can you tell me your name, my love?’ she asks.

‘Evan,’ he says. ‘I’m Evan Ferrers.’ He looks up at her, and the scourge of torment is in his face. ‘Do you think you could ring my mum, and ask her to come and take me home?’

ELEVEN

It's something Claire feels inclined never to forgive herself, one of her life's most perfect ironies, that despite her being almost housebound and a near-recluse all this time – eight months and five days – when they come to bring her the news, she isn't home. Instead, she's meandering aimlessly around Sainsbury's, looking over the English strawberries. She picks up a punnet, and sniffs the red scent through the pierced cellophane, longing for better things, a better place, to go back in time, or forwards, anywhere but here. There's such nostalgia in the scent of strawberries – expeditions to summer fields, Evan running up and down the rows of the pick-your-own, berry stains covering his shorts. And her mother with them: her mother used to love picking strawberries. Claire feels a pang, a pain in her chest she knows is heartbreak, but for whom she isn't sure. Her mother was gone before Evan disappeared, and it's a blessing she was spared.

On the Maidenhead road the traffic's bad, and that adds twenty minutes to her journey, so she's fretting about the chilled stuff in the heat, marvelling at the same time that she can still be bothered by such trivialities as melting butter. When she turns into the cul-de-sac and sees the car, the last green shoot of hope – the one protected with such fierce care against the landslip of probability – dies.

She knows it's them, not because she recognises the car but because she's learned how they operate. There are always two, this time a woman and a man, side by side in the front seats, both in white shirts, and even though they must have heard her coming, they don't turn to look, but keep facing forwards, like automatons yet to be switched on. She knows it's them, and she knows they must have something of face-to-face importance to say, or they'd have phoned. A word comes to her mind – *remains*. Instinct tells her this is going to be about remains.

She pulls up on the driveway and turns off the engine, but she doesn't get out of the car. She's savouring these last few moments, the final

moments when she isn't formally bereaved, when her son might still – an outside chance, bleak odds but odds nonetheless – come home. In the rear-view mirror she watches them climb from their car. She knows the woman; her last name's Naylor, and she always said, *Call me Rachel*, but Claire never did. The other one was here that very first night, a younger man, lean in his tight suit-trousers, walking two steps behind the woman.

She wishes Matt were here, but Matt might be anywhere. He might be coming home tonight or he might be away; these days she barely notices and doesn't really care. Over time, there have been reversals. In the early days, she clung to him, hated him to leave. Now she's glad to have an empty house: no need to cook, no reason not to collapse on the sofa with a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc and banal TV.

When the officers reach her car, there's an awkward moment when the driver's window is closed between them and the policewoman's looking in at her expectantly. Claire thinks she would like to freeze time right here and never know what's coming next, but the scene is too ridiculous to be borne for more than seconds. She turns the key a notch in the ignition, and the dashboard lights flash on. She presses the button in the door armrest, and the window slides open.

Naylor is almost smiling, and Claire's wondering how she dare.

'How are you, Claire?' The question's unnecessary, answered in Claire's pale, unmade-up face and careless clothes. Her hand on the steering wheel is bony and blue-veined. Naylor remembers the woman she met on that first night, sleekly coiffured, her nails recently done. In the space of the next few hours, that well-groomed woman disappeared, and Naylor has never seen her since. Those once-glossy fingernails are marred with white spots, which Naylor has read is a sign of zinc deficiency. Claire has the same washed-out, malnourished sallowness as women on prison diets of white bread and margarine, the result of being institutionalised, of never breathing fresh air.

Claire thinks fleetingly about politeness and preamble but instead she asks, 'What's going on?' She's hoping Naylor will say, *Only a routine visit*, or *Just keeping in touch*, but she doesn't.

'Matt's not here?' she asks, and Claire shakes her head. 'What time will

he be home?’

Claire half-remembers him saying something about Oxford, but can think of no reason why he should go there. At the time, she didn’t bother to ask.

‘I think he might be away tonight,’ she says. ‘What’s this about?’

‘I’ll get my colleague to ring him,’ says Naylor. She opens the car door for Claire. ‘Shall we go inside?’

Claire puts her handbag on the hall table alongside one of the Sainsbury’s carrier bags – a top-of-their-range fish pie, a bottle of New Zealand white, a packet of Mr Kipling cakes. In the end, the strawberries had seemed too emotionally charged.

‘Shall we have a cup of tea?’ asks Naylor, doing that thing they tend to do, taking over your house, making you feel inept, controlled and taken care of, all at the same time. ‘Put the kettle on, Brad.’

The young man in the tight suit doesn’t balk, but goes immediately to do as he’s told, and Claire is momentarily embarrassed as she remembers the state of the kitchen, the unwashed plates she ought to have put in the dishwasher, the rubbish she should have taken out days ago, the surfaces she should have wiped down.

As Naylor ushers Claire into the lounge, she notices how things have changed. Dust has settled everywhere, and there’s a stillness to the room which is unnerving. The photographs of Evan she remembers are no longer here. In their place are dirty cups and glasses, and a half-eaten sandwich going stale on a plate.

Claire doesn’t apologise for the mess. In the kitchen, the young man is speaking into a phone, and she hears him saying *Mr Ferrers*, introducing himself as DS Hagen and leaving a lengthy message on Matt’s switched-off phone.

‘If there’s any chance of Matt getting here, I’d like to talk to you both together,’ says Naylor. She takes a seat in an armchair. Claire’s grateful for the sofa, in case she might have to lie down. She’s feeling a touch light-headed, a little shaky in her hands.

Vehemently, she shakes her head.

‘Tell me now,’ she says. ‘You have to tell me now.’

Naylor senses the dread in Claire's voice, but with the apprehension is the desperate need to know, even though the woman's expecting the worst of all bad news. How, after all this time, could she be expecting anything else?

In the kitchen, Hagen's finishing his call.

'It's good news,' says Naylor, knowing that's only half the story. 'Evan's been found.'

'I knew it!' The grief on Claire's face is as fresh as that first night. 'Where? Where did they find him?'

'Alive, Claire. He's been found alive.'

Claire covers her face with her hands. From the kitchen comes the sound of the kettle boiling, of cupboards opening as Hagen searches for clean mugs.

'Claire?' Naylor asks gently. She leans forwards and touches Claire's knee.

Claire jumps up from the sofa and runs to the downstairs cloakroom, where Naylor can't help but hear her throwing up.

Glorious mid-summer, mid-afternoon. Curlews are wheeling and calling across the fell, and the breeze bending the cotton grass carries the peaty scent of bracken, and the bleating of the ewes and lambs in the home field. When Jack reaches the house, Dora's fallen asleep in the deckchair on the lawn, her reading glasses and newspaper folded in her lap. He thinks that he should wake her or she'll never sleep tonight, but as he's about to touch her shoulder, through the French doors he hears the phone ring.

Drowsy flies are buzzing in the hall. Out of recent habit, before he answers the phone Jack touches the photograph of himself and Evan, a talismanic gesture and a small prayer.

He picks up the receiver and says hello.

'Dad.' Jack becomes very still. Every time Matt phones, Jack fears bad news, the final snuffing of his fading hope. But this evening Matt's voice is different, lighter and brighter than it's been in a long time. 'Are you there, Dad?'

Jack clears his throat.

'Yes, I'm here,' he says, all bluff. 'You're lucky to catch me. I've only

just come in.'

'You might want to sit down, Dad,' says Matt. 'I've got some news. Good news, though. Brilliant news, actually. It's Evan, Dad. Evan's been found.'

Jack isn't sure whether the buzzing he can hear is the flies, or if it's only in his ears. He looks down at the photograph by the phone, at the little boy beaming at his jar of sticklebacks, at a younger, carefree version of himself.

And he dare not ask the question that leaps to mind: dead or alive?

'They had him in a car, in Ferrybridge. Where the power station is,' Matt is saying. 'Christ knows why there. They've taken him to hospital, but they say he's fine.' There's a beat of silence between them, unwanted acknowledgement of the unlikelihood of Evan being fine. 'The police are driving Claire up, and I'm meeting her there. We just wanted you to be the first to know. Dad? Are you there, Dad?'

Warm tears are running down Jack's face.

'I'm here,' he manages to say. 'Thank God.'

'I know it's a shock, Dad. When I got the message . . . Well, to be honest I thought they were going to say something different. You'll tell Mum for me, will you?'

'She'll be beside herself,' says Jack, wiping away tears. 'She'll be absolutely over the moon. That's the best news we could ever have had, and I thank God for it. It's the answer to all our prayers. Thank God he's safe.'

'I must go,' says Matt. 'I just wanted you to know. I'll ring you from the hospital, let you know how he is.'

'You give him our best love, and a big hug from both of us.' Jack reaches out and touches the photo frame. 'And ring as soon as you can. And Matt, promise me you'll tell that boy how his grandma and grandpa missed him. Tell him his grandma's baking a cake, and we can hardly wait to see him.'

Claire is riding in the back of a police car, no siren going but blue lights flashing. They're moving pretty fast, or maybe it's that other drivers slow down when they see them in the rear-view mirror, start behaving and driving at seventy. Naylor's in the front passenger seat, next to the uniformed driver. For the first few miles, she tries to keep the conversation

going, but by the time they reach the M25, they've all lapsed into silence, and Naylor has laid her head back on the rest, maybe to doze. Claire sits silent in the back, fizzing with excitement, overwhelmed with apprehension about how Evan will be, hoping for reasons she can't quite define that she'll be there before Matt, wondering how long it will take him to drive from Colchester.

Colchester. She doesn't remember him mentioning Colchester.

She wonders if Evan will recognise her, if she's changed very much, whether she'll recognise him, how much he's grown. When she spoke to him on the phone – tears in his voice, surrounded by strangers and trying to be brave – he sounded like himself but different, an Evan she fears she won't know. Out of the side window, she watches the traffic, people going about their everyday business, and marks off in her mind their northern progress. Luton, Milton Keynes, Northampton. They pass Leicester and Derby, and beyond Derby, cross the South Yorkshire border into what she's always thought of as true north: Rotherham, Doncaster. Near Doncaster, they see the first signs for Pontefract, where Evan is waiting.

Naylor hasn't spoken for a while, but now she turns round in her seat and smiles at Claire.

'Not far now,' she says. 'It'll be a big story again, when it breaks. We're going to try and get you in and out of there before that happens.'

Claire remembers how it was to be besieged, how she hated the press camped outside; then she remembers her resentment when they drifted away, when other people's dramas became more interesting. She doesn't want them back again. She looks out at the passing landscape, and wonders how her son has ended up here, in this part of the country which is unknown to her. Is this where he's been all this time? She's curious, but fearful of what he'll tell her; she wants to know, but isn't sure she can bear what he might say. Instead she focuses her mind on their reunion, on how wonderful it will be to have him home.

At Pontefract General Infirmary, they pull up at a barrier across the entrance to a Staff Only car park. Matt's car's there, double-parked and blocking someone in, and he's at the wheel with the driver's door open, a uniformed policeman crouched beside him, chatting as if they were passing

the time of day. As Claire climbs from the car, Matt gets out too, switching off his phone and slipping it into his pocket, handing his keys to the policeman in case his car has to be moved. Seeing him brings home the enormity of why they're there, and suddenly she wants to be close to him in a way she thought she never would again. Who else but he could understand how she's feeling, how it's possible to be elated and terrified at the same time? Already she wants to cry, and as he holds out his hand to her – she's surprised at that, he's not normally one for PDAs – she grasps it, and finds herself wiping away tears. When he puts his arm round her shoulder and pulls her close, she's grateful for the support.

'OK?' he asks, and she shakes her head, and he says, 'It'll be fine. Let's go get him, and take him home.'

'Will they let us?' Claire asks. 'Just like that?'

Matt doesn't answer, because he knows, as does she, that's unlikely to happen. As they walk towards the hospital building, Naylor's following close behind.

On the ward, more police are waiting, two men in plain-clothes suits incongruous amongst blue nurses' tunics and patients' dressing gowns. At the nurses' station, Naylor speaks to the sister, who pages the doctor in charge of Evan's care.

But a sixth sense has opened up in Claire, a kind of radar she didn't know she had. Leaving all of them standing at the station, she walks, then runs along the corridor. No one tries to stop her. Patients and staff stand back, out of her way.

Somehow she knows which way to go. At the end of the ward, there's a private room. On the bed lies a thin boy, his back to the door.

She'd know him anywhere. When she says his name, he turns to her with desolate eyes, and both their tears begin.

TWELVE

19 June

At Ashridge police station, the third-floor incident room has reappeared fully formed: whiteboards and monitors, keyboards and phones and the miles of cabling to go with them. The paperwork is taking over the desktops, and the waste bins are already filling up with the greasy wrappings of all-day-breakfast sandwiches. There's an undercurrent of muskiness, of male sweat held in check by deodorant, and an overtone of coffee from Ron Perdue's percolator steaming away in its corner. Hagen's got his jacket on, talking to Campbell, but it's not clear if he's just arrived, or is on his way out.

Campbell spots Naylor as she comes into the room and beckons her over. He's sitting on the corner of Hagen's desk, affecting his casual down-with-the-boys pose. His tie's off to one side, and there's a shirt button missing over his sternum. Since he's no longer married, the standard of his grooming's taken a dive.

Naylor detours via her own temporary desk, dumps her handbag, glances at a couple of messages on yellow Post-it notes but sees nothing of interest. There's a burst of laughter over by the coffee machine, and she sees Leon Dallabrida, built like a super-hero and towering over a couple of their colleagues. Dallabrida's not the brains of the outfit, but he's straight down the line and he tells some brilliant jokes. On days when it's nothing but wall-to-wall bad news, he can be relied on to come up with a real cracker and burst any bubble of incident room gloom. Naylor's sorry she's missed the gag he's just told.

'Here she is,' says Campbell, as she joins him and Hagen. 'We're just saying, we should be making arrests by now. We need Evan to look at some pictures. The photofits are ready – PR are organising national coverage on them – and the Chief's asked me to do a press conference this afternoon.'

'Don't forget to get that button stitched on,' Naylor says.

Campbell looks bewildered.

‘There’s one missing on your shirt,’ Naylor explains. ‘The Chief won’t be happy if you go on the BBC with a button missing.’

Discomfited, Campbell glances down at his front, and readjusts his tie to cover the gap. Hagen’s eyebrows lift almost imperceptibly, and he gives Naylor the tiniest hint of a smile.

Campbell is about to say something, but Naylor heads him off.

‘Rose has a sewing kit,’ she says. ‘She was in the Girl Guides. She’s good with things like that.’

‘Do you think Evan’s ready?’ asks Hagen. ‘Where are we on the psychological evaluations?’

‘The child specialists have had a couple of meetings with him, and no surprises, he’s not good,’ says Naylor. ‘The feedback from them is that, except for when he was first found and a short phone call with his mum, he hasn’t said a single word, not even to his parents. They’re calling it elective mutism. Not that uncommon following major trauma like he’s been through.’

‘Even so,’ says Campbell. ‘If you could persuade him to go through a few known offenders, that would help. What about the car? Surely there must be something from that?’

‘Not as much as we hoped,’ says Hagen. ‘Reported stolen in the intervening. Lots of prints but no matches to anyone we know. They’re checking what CCTV we’ve got and ANPR, but don’t hold your breath.’

‘So what do you think, Rachel?’ asks Campbell. ‘Do you think you can get the boy to have a look?’

‘If he isn’t talking, what’s the point in putting him through that? Going through the rogues’ galleries at this stage will only cause the poor kid more pain.’

‘He’s been gone a while, though,’ says Hagen in his Geordie lilt. ‘No saying who he might have bumped into on his travels, and we need that information. We’ve got to be proactive. It’s a one hundred percent certainty they’ll be on the lookout for another victim to take Evan’s place.’

There’s a short silence amongst them as they consider the implications of Hagen’s words.

‘OK,’ says Naylor. ‘I’ll do my best.’

‘Great stuff,’ says Campbell. As he stands up, he looks over her shoulder. ‘Where’s Rose? Rose, there you are. Can I have a word?’

Campbell does a good job at the press conference. Presenting himself well is what he excels at, and he speaks with his usual authority, addressing the crowd of journalists with a suitably grave face, avoiding the stilted police-speak so many officers fall into when faced with microphones and cameras. Today two new photofit pictures are on screens behind him, images of a pair of unattractive, unremarkable men, put together from witness statements from the Ferrybridge filling station. Campbell’s shirt, Naylor notices, has all its buttons in place. At the table beside him, Hagen looks hot and uncomfortable, eyes down on the notes in front of him as the cameras flash and whirr. In the front row, Naylor recognises a well-known woman presenter from ITV news, who looks older in the flesh and disturbingly thin.

The questions, when Campbell asks for them, are largely predictable.

‘Chief Inspector, in the light of this development, were you too hasty before in shutting down your investigation into Evan’s abduction?’

Campbell appears to consider.

‘Based on the evidence we had at that time, I don’t believe so, no. And it’s wrong to say our investigation was shut down. Evan’s case, like many others, was always subject to review if new information came to light. Which, I’m very pleased to say, is what’s happening now.’

‘Can you tell us how Evan’s doing, Chief Inspector?’

‘He’s recovering at home with his family after a very difficult ordeal, and I’m sure you ladies and gentlemen will respect their need for privacy. I don’t think it’s appropriate or necessary for me to say more than that at present.’

As Campbell is asking the room for any final questions, Naylor feels a hand on her shoulder. A man is standing behind her, old enough to be her father but attractive in a silver fox way, wearing a hoody and jeans with old trainers.

She turns sharply to see who’s touched her, meets the man’s eyes and gives a broad smile.

‘Bloody hell, Ron,’ she says. ‘Don’t you know better than to sneak up behind a woman with self-defence skills? What brings you here?’

‘I heard the circus was in town,’ says Ron Perdue, nodding towards the front of the room where Campbell is thanking everyone for coming. ‘It’s a good turn-out. He’ll be pleased.’

‘We’re all pleased,’ says Naylor. ‘It’s a nasty case, and we need all the help we can get.’

‘I’ve read about it,’ says Perdue. ‘I was wondering if you’d care to join me at the Lamb and Lion for a pie and a pint, for old times’ sake.’ He pats his stomach. ‘As you can see, retirement is keeping me from the requisite daily calorie intake to maintain my beer gut.’

Naylor looks him up and down.

‘I can see you’ve lost a few pounds,’ she says. ‘But you might have put on a suit.’

‘Retirees’ prerogative, to dress like a slob,’ says Perdue. ‘Anyway, I don’t own a suit any more, except the black one I keep for funerals. I made a big bonfire and burned them all. Very therapeutic. So, are you coming, or what?’

‘Bit early for lunch.’

‘Call it research. You can pick my brains, and I’m buying.’

‘In that case, I’m right behind you.’

On the short walk to the Lamb and Lion, Perdue and Naylor don’t say much. The pub is down a narrow alley still paved with cobblestones, and the low doorways and leaded windows of the neighbouring buildings always make Naylor feel she’s stepped into a Dickens novel. The illusion is short-lived. Though the outside’s totally traditional, inside the pub’s been given the inevitable brewery makeover to cater to their assumption of modern tastes: dove-grey walls, menus painted on blackboards, the old red-plush banquettes dumped in favour of satin-varnished pine. It’s not yet twelve and the bar is quiet. Behind the pumps, a student in a low-cut T-shirt gives them a practised smile.

‘What’ll you have?’ asks Ron.

‘Orange juice and soda,’ says Naylor.

‘One of those,’ says Perdue to the barmaid. ‘And a pint of lager shandy

for me.'

As the barmaid fixes the drinks, Perdue looks around.

'I preferred this place in the old days,' he says. 'Toilets out back and cigarette burns in the upholstery. It was the end of proper pubs, the smoking ban. All the interesting people you used to meet go and stand outside.'

'Why would you object to a smoking ban? You don't smoke. I remember the air in here being so thick sometimes you'd struggle to find enough oxygen to fill one lung, never mind two.'

'And are you still smoking?'

'No,' says Naylor. 'Gave up months ago. I got fed up putting all that tax into the public coffers when none of it gets spent where it should be.'

The barmaid places a tall glass in front of her, and Naylor takes a long drink.

'Very wise. Are you eating?' Perdue looks up at the blackboard at the end of the bar, where the menu is written up in white chalk as if it changes every day. Perdue knows it doesn't; the only things that change are the prices, which always go up, he notices, never down. 'Steak and kidney for me, please, love,' he says to the barmaid. 'No chips, just peas.'

'No chips?' asks Naylor. 'That's a first. I'll have the same, chips and peas on mine.'

'You can afford a few chips,' says Perdue, as they make their way to a table by the window. 'You've lost a couple of pounds too.'

'You know how it is,' says Naylor, sitting down on a chair which looks more comfortable than it is. 'No time to shop, less time to cook. I end up living on sandwiches and takeaways.'

'That's a slippery slope.' Perdue takes a seat on the opposite side of the table, moving a dessert menu to make room for his glass. 'A diet like that'll give you ulcers, sooner or later. Though I have to say you look good on it. I like your hair like that, by the way. Suits you.'

Naylor smiles, and makes a show of patting her French pleat.

'Thanks,' she says. 'New hairstyle, new life. I'm moving on.'

'You ever hear anything from Tim?'

Naylor's smile slips, and the shadow of a headache crosses her face.

'Not these days. We're not exactly top of each other's Christmas card

lists, after what happened. Last I heard he was living in Cornwall. He'd love it down there, wall-to-wall surfing. Right up his alley.'

'I always wondered if you might get back together.'

Naylor shakes her head.

'No chance. Turns out he's not the forgiving kind. But I've got the flat, and I'm comfortable there. I've even got a cat for company.'

'You don't like cats.'

'This one was down on its luck, and I was feeling sentimental. We went to a sudden death, a youngish guy whose heart gave out. Turned out to be heart failure induced by so-called energy drinks. Anyway, he had this cat, a scarred old bruiser who looked like he was on his last legs, and I thought the poor thing wouldn't last long in an animal shelter. He's no trouble and it's good to have a warm body to go home to, even if it's covered in ginger fur.'

The food arrives, and while they eat, the talk's all station gossip: who's sleeping with who, who's heading for promotion, the outcomes of the cases Perdue left unresolved.

'That youth who stamped on the homeless bloke outside the Ernest Road chip shop, what happened to him?' he asks, finishing the last of his pie.

'Eighteen months,' says Naylor. 'He thought he was going to get it suspended, but with his back catalogue of offending, the judge took a different view.'

'Should have got longer. He's a vicious little bastard, that one.'

'Well, he's off our radar for now.' Naylor eats her last chip. 'And what about you, Ron? Are you finding plenty to occupy yourself, now you've hung up your spurs?'

Ron shrugs.

'I suppose. We've been away a couple of times, the Lake District, Dorset. June always wanted to go to Dorset, and I always said it was too far away if something happened.'

'So what brought you here today? Was it just coincidence that we were having the biggest bun-fight of a press conference we've had in years?'

Perdue drains his glass.

‘You know me better than that,’ he says. ‘Fancy coffee?’

The pub is filling up. As Perdue waits at the bar to put in their order, Naylor spots a couple of the journalists from the press conference amongst the shoppers and pensioners who’ve wandered in for lunch. Campbell’s new PA is here with a good-looking young man Naylor doesn’t know. She’s a pretty girl, well-dressed, not unlike Campbell’s last PA, the one who got him into so much trouble. He’d have been wiser, thinks Naylor, to have hired someone older, less of a temptation. Then she looks across at Perdue and catches herself thinking how good he still looks. When it comes to chemistry between two people, what does age matter?

Perdue waits for the coffees and carries them back to the table.

‘I know you have to get back to work,’ he says, retaking his seat. ‘A case like this with the world’s eyes on you, you don’t want to be caught taking long lunches.’ He tears the top off a packet of sugar and pours it into his cup, reaches for a second packet but leaves it on the table. ‘Old habits.’

‘You should go cold turkey,’ says Naylor, putting sugar in her own cup. ‘They say it’s the easiest way.’

‘What about that old coffee-maker of mine? Is that still going?’

‘Still fuelling the entire department. Working overtime most of the time. Makes a big difference, having drinkable coffee at three in the morning. That stuff from the machine gives me a headache.’ She takes a sip of her Americano. ‘So come on, Ron. What’s your interest with Evan Ferrers?’

Perdue sighs and sits back in his chair.

‘Something’s been niggling at me. Probably you’ve thought of it already, but for me the big question is, where were they heading?’

‘The filling station they called in at was on the way into Pontefract. Number plate recognition last picked them up on the M62 around Wakefield, travelling east, and we’ve first got them on the A61, southbound from Harrogate. Hard to say what their exact direction of travel was in Pontefract. Apparently at that filling station you can drive on to the pumps from either east or west.’

‘So what’s your take on it?’

‘We’ve asked West Yorkshire to make local enquiries, check car park CCTV and see if anyone remembers the vehicle parked anywhere in the

area. Problem is, of course, where did their journey originate? That part of the world is a bit sparse on cameras, so it's going to be a long, hard slog. Even if we've got an idea of the area where they started out, there are still hundreds of square miles to go at.'

'Ah, well. Now you've hit the nub of what's been niggling me.'

'What do you mean, Ron? Come on, spit it out.'

'You know me. I'm not good with technology, and you know my thoughts on putting your faith in ANPR. Did you see that story in the *Telegraph*?'

'I don't believe I've ever read a story in the *Telegraph*.'

'Maybe you should. What they were reporting was that one in twelve drivers is now taking steps to outwit the cameras. One in twelve is up to something dodgy, Rachel. Cloned number plates, altering digits and letters, all ducking and diving under the ANPR lenses. All you need's a permanent marker and you're away.'

'So when I heard where the boy was found, I got out my trusty road atlas, and had a look at that neck of the woods. And you're quite right, there're thousands of places where they might have kept him. But I think you should consider a different viewpoint.'

'As in?'

'What does a tight bastard like me hate more than anything? Being ripped off at the pumps. It really bugs me, being made to pay over the odds at motorway service stations. So what do I do? Firstly, if I'm travelling on the motorways, I make sure I've got a reasonable amount of fuel before I set off. Secondly, if I do need fuel, I won't pay service-station prices. I leave the motorway and drive a couple of miles to find somewhere cheaper. Especially if I'm going to be travelling a long way. Now, if you look at the map, what do you see in the Pontefract area? Arterial routes. The M62 running east to west, and the A1 running north-south. It's a national intersection.'

Naylor drinks more of her coffee. For a few moments, neither of them speak.

'You're saying we shouldn't focus on West Yorkshire.'

'I'm suggesting you consider the possibility the driver was hard up or

tight like me, and didn't want to pay top whack for a tank of fuel. So he made a detour to a cheaper filling station. I'm suggesting that it might have been anywhere, and that Pontefract is an irrelevance. That it just happened to be the place where the fuel gauge hit red. And bearing in mind what I said about not getting caught short, that by the time they reached the Pontefract area, they'd already burned a significant amount of fuel.'

Naylor looks at him.

'That's not very helpful,' she says. 'That would mean we should extend our search area massively towards every point of the compass.'

'Not quite. There's something else you want to think about. Two men with a live cargo like that, they're not going to be careless. Bet your bottom dollar they've got major concerns about falling foul of ANPR, flawed as it may be. Since you haven't found spare number plates – and bear in mind you can whip them on and off with strips of Velcro, so never rule it out – I think you should consider something else. Maybe they used more than one car.'

'That suggests some careful planning.'

'They've got a real, live boy in the boot. Wouldn't you be planning carefully?'

'So you're saying they could have been going from anywhere, to anywhere?'

'It's not as bad as that,' says Perdue. 'Have a good look at the map. You've clocked them twice, so you've got a general direction of travel. My gut says don't trust the Wakefield spot, because that could be a detour. Ducking and diving, remember? They were coming from the north, no doubt about that, but don't get stuck thinking they began their journey near Harrogate. Two cars, Rachel, I guarantee it. Maybe more than two. Start there.'

'Campbell's not going to like it. He thinks we're already closing in.'

'Well, I don't think you are. Widen your search area, or I think you're going to be making a serious mistake. Remember the Yorkshire Ripper.'

'The Wearside Jack tapes.'

'Wearside Jack indeed. You think you've got a solid lead, and it takes you right up the longest blind alley of your career. Too much police time

focused on that hoax cost three women their lives. Hasn't the boy given you any idea of where you should be looking?'

'He's not saying anything at all.'

'Hardly surprising. Give him time.'

'We need him to talk,' Naylor looks at her watch. 'I have to go. It's been good to see you, Ron.' She reaches for her purse, but Perdue stops her.

'My treat,' he says. 'But get your map out, Rachel, and use some logic. West Yorkshire's a red herring. I'd stake my reputation on it. Promise me you'll look into it.'

'We'll look into it,' says Naylor. 'Give June my regards.'

It's after six when Naylor leaves the office that evening. Dallabrida catches up with her as she gets into the lift, slapping a hand on the edge to force the half-closed doors to slide back. He steps in beside her, bringing his smell of Gucci aftershave and spearmint gum.

He stands legs astride like a Bob Hoskins gangster, hands folded over his crotch in a bouncer's pose, so close to her they'd be shoulder to shoulder, if Dallabrida's shoulder weren't so much higher than her own.

'I hate these things,' he says. 'Phobic, I am.' His accent's pure Essex, or maybe East End; Naylor can't tell the difference. 'I like to have someone to hold my hand.'

He has big hands, and long fingers which would make huge fists. Naylor imagines how it would feel if one of Dallabrida's hands landed on your shoulder, if it were feeling your collar.

'You could take the stairs,' she says.

The lift doors close.

'Too late,' says Dallabrida. 'I'll have to master my fears, and plunge with you all the way to the ground floor.'

Naylor almost smiles.

'How's it going, anyway?' he asks, as the lift begins to move. 'Thought we'd be bringing 'em in by now, with us having the car and everythin'. How's the boy doing?'

'Not great.' Naylor thinks she feels her phone buzz in her pocket and pulls it out, but it's wishful thinking. The screen is blank.

The lift clunks to a halt on the first floor. The doors slide open, but no

one gets in.

Dallabrida leans across her and presses the Door Close button.

‘These things get on my tits. You’re right, I should take the stairs.’ The doors close again. As the lift starts to move, he says, ‘I was going to go for a drink, just a quick one at the Bell. You fancy a drink, Rachel?’

She slips the phone back into her pocket.

‘Not tonight,’ she says.

‘Hot date, eh?’ asks Dallabrida. ‘Who’s the lucky fella?’

‘No one you know.’

The doors open on to the lobby. Dallabrida makes a show of letting Naylor step out in front of him.

‘Another time then, eh?’

She looks him in the face. He’s got a bullish head, his hair’s shaved very close, and his nose has been broken at least once. He’s not good-looking in any conventional sense, but he’s got nice eyes. All the girls talk about Dallabrida’s big brown eyes.

‘You’re not my type, Leon,’ she says.

Dallabrida smiles.

‘‘Course I am,’ he says. ‘I’m every woman’s type, I am. Loaded with charm, like a pizza with every kind of topping. How’re you fixed for tomorrow?’

‘Goodnight, Leon,’ says Naylor. As she walks away, she finds herself smiling. Then she checks her silent phone again, and the smile slips away.

In Waitrose, the produce shelves are depleted, and there are no avocados for the salad she was going to make. She picks up a bag of spinach and a pack of cherry tomatoes. They’ve lowered the chiller temperatures to compensate for the heat, and wandering between the fridges, she shivers. She puts chicken breasts and prosciutto in her basket, and picks up a bottle of Chianti from a special offer display. Then she adds a bottle of Merlot, just in case.

As she reaches her car, her phone rings. When she sees who’s calling, she smiles.

‘Hello you,’ she says. ‘How are you doing?’ There’s a moment of silence, long enough to tell her there’s a problem. ‘Where are you?’

‘At the leisure centre. I’ve just dropped Harry off for cricket.’

‘What time are you coming over?’

She can’t help herself asking the question, even though instinct and experience have already told her the answer.

‘It’s going to be difficult tonight,’ he says. ‘Bridget’s not very well. She’s gone to bed, so I’m saddled with taxi duty.’

‘For God’s sake.’ The bag in her hand feels suddenly heavy. Naylor presses the unlock button on her key, and the car beeps. She pops open the boot and stows the carrier bag inside. ‘You promised.’

‘What could I say?’ he asks. ‘Come on, Rachel. Don’t be like that.’

‘Come on yourself,’ says Naylor, and ends the call.

THIRTEEN

21 June

Jack's given Bob Sturgess a list of what needs doing, even though Bob's been farming more years than even Jack and could run Ainsclough Top with his eyes shut.

Sensing his leaving, Millie the collie presses herself against Jack's legs. He bends down and strokes her head.

'You'll ring me if there's any problems?' he says, and Bob nods his assent. 'We'll be back by Saturday at the latest.'

Dora's already waiting in the car, wearing a summer frock decorated with yellow tulips. Jack climbs in beside her and starts the engine.

'You look nice, love,' he says. 'I haven't seen that dress for a while.'

'I haven't been able to get into it for a long time,' says Dora. 'I suppose I must have lost a bit of weight. Has Bob got a key to the house?'

'House key, sheds and everywhere else. And I've told him to ring Matt's if he's any problems. He knows what he's doing. Have you got everything you need?'

'I think so.'

'And is that cake put somewhere safe?'

'I put it under your jacket to keep it out of the sun. I think it'll be all right.'

Jack takes it steady down the pitted lane, slowing down even more to make a last eyeball check on the ewes and lambs on the home field. At the bottom of the hill, two weeks without rain have reduced the stream to a trickle, though the banks are still lush with grass, and pretty with corncockles and kingcups. High clouds are beginning to encroach over Blackmire Ridge, but as they reach the road the sky ahead is clear, and Jack puts on the Yankees cap Matt brought him from America to shield his eyes from the sun's glare.

At first, it promises to be a good day for a drive, but it's high summer

and a lot of kids are out of school. The roads are busy, and there's a long delay at Ripon and again just before Wetherby. By the time they get through the jam, Jack decides they'll pull into the services for a break.

He parks the old Freelander in a quiet spot and finds the cool-bag Dora has packed with lunch. Sitting with the car doors open to let in a breeze, they drink tea from a flask and eat their sandwiches seasoned with the smell of petrol fumes and the noise of fast traffic in the background: corned beef and pickle for Jack, cheese and lettuce for Dora, though she re-wraps half of hers back in the foil.

'You haven't eaten much,' says Jack. 'Do you want one of these?'

'I'm not very hungry,' says Dora. 'It's so hot.' For a long moment, she watches the motorway, the trucks and cars hurtling by. 'What if he doesn't want to see us?'

About to take another bite of his sandwich, Jack looks at her.

'What do you mean?'

'Evan. I mean Evan. With what Matt's said about him being so quiet, I wonder if we're doing the right thing, going down there.'

She turns to face him, and he sees that behind her glasses, her eyes are filled with tears.

'We didn't do anything to help him, did we? All the time he was with – whoever he was with, why didn't we try to find him? Why didn't we lock up the farm and get in this car and spend all our time looking for him? What if he asks us that, Jack? What are we going to say? And now he's come home, and we're turning up expecting him to still be our Evan, all smiles as if he'd been away to scout camp or somewhere. If he isn't pleased to see us, I shan't be a bit surprised. And if he isn't pleased to see us, it'll break my heart.'

Jack puts his sandwich on the dashboard and takes her hand.

'I won't lie, it's crossed my mind too. And to be honest, we can't expect him to be the same boy we knew. He's bound to have changed, and I'm sorry to say, not for the better. But don't you think it'll help him to know his old grandma and grandad still love him just the same? What do you think, that we shouldn't go in case he's not nice to us? After what he's been through, I should think you and I can cope with him not being very nice.'

We're made of tough stuff, aren't we, Mrs Ferrers, eh?'

She nods, and blows her nose on a handkerchief embroidered with primroses.

'You're right,' she says. 'Of course you're right. Not going would be far worse than going, so we'd better pack up and get on.'

All the way south, Dora is quiet, and Jack lets her be so. At Peterborough, they stop for tea and buttered scones, and by the time they reach the M25, it's close to rush hour. Traffic crawls. Even in his shirt-sleeves, Jack's too hot. It's time to take one of his tablets, but they're in a suitcase in the back. When they reach the turn-off to Matt's, Dora's dozing, her eyebrows pulled together, frowning as she sleeps.

It's been a while since they've been down here, not since the Christmas before Evan was taken. Last Christmas he and Dora spent alone, with a roast chicken for lunch and a bottle of wine, no tree, no decorations, no presents. There have been changes in the town – a street he used to go down is now one-way – and for a few minutes he thinks they're lost, until he sees a Tesco he remembers.

He gives Dora a gentle nudge.

'Wake up, love,' he says. 'We're nearly there.'

Dora rouses herself, looks in the sun-visor mirror, pats at her hair and freshens her lipstick. She puts her hand over Jack's on the gearstick and gives it a squeeze.

They're turning into Matt's road. The house is straight ahead.

'Ready, Mrs Ferrers?' asks Jack, and Dora nods.

'The garden's looking nice,' says Jack, even though it isn't, beyond the grass being carelessly cut.

Matt's come striding out to greet them as they pull up in the drive, and he hugs his father in a way Jack can't remember him ever doing before. It's a hug filled with relief, a survivor's hug, with a loud subtext of *Thank Christ*.

Dora thinks Claire looks unwell, though she's smiling as she kisses Dora on the cheek.

Claire leads the way into the house.

'I'll bet you're ready for a cup of tea,' she says.

‘Or a cold beer,’ says Matt. ‘That’s what I’m going to have. Dad, can I get you one?’

‘By and by,’ says Jack. ‘There’s business to attend to, first.’

The kitchen smells of frying garlic and tomatoes. There’s a bottle of red wine open on the counter from which one glass is already gone.

‘I’m doing spaghetti and meatballs,’ says Claire. She switches on the kettle and takes mugs down from a cupboard. ‘I thought we’d all like that.’

Dora has brought in nothing from the car but her handbag and the cake tin.

‘I made his favourite,’ she says, and looks into the lounge. ‘Where is he?’

‘Let’s have our tea, shall we?’ says Claire. ‘He’ll be down when he’s ready. Shall I take that?’ She lifts the cake tin lid. ‘Ah, chocolate! I’m sure he’ll love it.’

Overhead, a floorboard creaks. They settle in the lounge.

‘So, any more news?’ asks Jack, and Matt shakes his head and signals upwards with his eyes to denote a taboo subject.

Jack changes tack. ‘How’s work?’

‘Oh, you know,’ says Matt. ‘Busy.’

‘You’re lucky he’s here,’ says Claire. ‘I don’t see very much of him, these days.’

‘I’m doing a lot of travelling at the moment,’ says Matt. ‘We’re trying to establish an office in Oxford.’

‘And Colchester,’ puts in Claire.

‘Well,’ says Matt. ‘That’s a different thing.’

The floorboards creak again. Jack catches Dora’s eye.

‘As long as you’re busy,’ says Dora. ‘I worry you’ll get laid off.’

‘I shan’t get laid off, Mum,’ says Matt, with a touch of irritation. ‘I’ve been made a director. How was your drive down?’

‘Oh, we did all right,’ says Jack. ‘Traffic was heavy around . . .’

He stops. Through the open lounge door, he can see the stairs, and on the stairs he can see a sock-clad foot. His eyes prick with tears, but he blinks them back, and signals Dora to stay in her chair. A second foot appears, and now he can see thin fingers on the banister.

Jack's heart is beating too fast; he really should find his tablets. Standing up from his chair, he crosses to the doorway and looks up.

He sees a skinny, dishevelled Evan, pale and sad-eyed, and Jack thinks his heart will break. But he puts on a smile, and moves to the bottom of the stairs.

‘Well, aren’t you a sight for sore eyes, my boy,’ he says. ‘Come and give your old grandpa a hug.’

And Evan does.

FOURTEEN

24 June

Naylor rings the doorbell at the Ferrerses' house. The routine is familiar from all those weeks they were backwards and forwards here when Evan went missing, and now the case is back in the forefront, they'll be backwards and forwards all over again. Some things haven't changed, though the season is different. Matt's Audi isn't there, but Claire's Renault is on the drive, looking less well-cared-for than it did. When Evan disappeared, the car was brand-new. The front garden smells of British summer, wet roses and dank greenery, and in the borders, virulent dandelions have taken hold, spoiling displays of pink dianthus and poking through spikes of salvias. The small front lawn has been recently mown and is strewn with clumps of Flymo-chewed grass. As the doorbell dies away, Naylor hears the usual sounds of the suburbs: a plane high overhead, the buzz of a strimmer, traffic on the high street, and far away, a siren.

When Claire opens the door she looks different, as if she might have reached the low point of her descent and be climbing back up. There are traces of colour in her cheeks, though her hair is still careless, swept back in a corner-chemist clip. She invites Naylor in. On the hall floor, there's a black bin bag, stuffed to capacity.

'Evan's old clothes,' says Claire. 'I kept them all, and now they're too small. Time to throw them out.'

Overhead, a floorboard creaks. A door closes, and a bolt rattles home.

Claire looks at Naylor, shrugs and leads the way to the kitchen, where the air's thick with oven chips and vinegar and warm sausage-fat from a pan on the stove. She offers Naylor a seat at the table, which is covered in clutter – a laptop, unopened mail, keys, a couple of DVDs – but the place overall seems tidier, cleaner. In recovery.

'I bought him a few bits to be going on with, but it's difficult,' says Claire. 'He's lost touch with everything, what's in and what's out, doesn't

know what his friends are wearing.’ She’s filling the kettle at the tap. ‘Listen to me, talking about his friends. I don’t think he’ll have many of those. I expect we’ll move now, have a fresh start. No bad thing, I suppose. Matt wanted to move anyway. We’re notorious around here, and he hates that, being whispered about, but I always resisted.’

She switches on the kettle and takes two white mugs from the cupboard. Naylor has white mugs at home, but hers were ordered from a cheap catalogue, a job lot of crockery, four place settings, when she moved into the new flat. Claire’s look like porcelain, an elegant design pleasing to the eye; they’ve got Habitat or John Lewis written all over them.

‘Earl Grey or English Breakfast?’

‘Builder’s,’ says Naylor. ‘Milk and one, please.’

A black cat is walking down the back garden path. The view from the kitchen window is of other people’s gardens, and of other houses. Claire opens the fridge to find the milk, and the fridge looks full, of vegetables and yogurt and cartons of juice.

‘I had this thing,’ Claire goes on, pouring milk, spooning sugar, ‘that he might come home. That he might turn up here one day, and wouldn’t find us. Wouldn’t that have been too awful? Now I wish we had moved, so he didn’t have to come back here, to being a curiosity. I don’t blame him for not wanting to go out.’

‘Doesn’t he want to go out?’

Claire shakes her head and places Naylor’s tea in front of her, still whirling from being stirred.

‘I think he feels like an alien, and he can’t seem to reconnect. I got him those DVDs to try and get him caught up, but I don’t think he’s interested.’

She finds a packet of chocolate biscuits, tips several on to a plate and puts them at the centre of the table, helping herself to one before she sits down. She dips the biscuit in her tea, and bites off the damp edge.

‘I survived on chocolate biscuits while he was gone. No nutritional value but lots of calories. I’m trying to eat better now, and trying to get him to eat well too. He used to be such a fussy eater, a bit of a nightmare, really. Now he doesn’t seem to care at all. The doctors say he needs to put on weight, but I can’t find anything he really wants. He seems so listless, so . .

.’ She glances up at the ceiling. ‘I don’t want him to hear. The first day or two, he clung to me, like he did when he was a toddler, my little shadow. Now he just wants to be up there by himself, and I don’t try too hard to persuade him down, because he feels like . . .’ Her eyes fill with tears. ‘He feels like someone I don’t know.’

‘It takes time, Claire,’ says Naylor. She sips her tea, working hard to resist the chocolate biscuits. In her pocket, her phone is buzzing, but she ignores it.

‘He doesn’t feel safe, not even with us,’ says Claire. ‘He asked Matt to put a bolt on his door, and he puts a chair under the door handle when he goes in the shower. I try not to mind. If that’s what he needs . . .’

‘We’ll get him the right help,’ says Naylor. ‘And when you think he might be ready, we’d like to talk to him. Not at the station or anything, somewhere he’ll feel supported. We have people who are specially trained. They’ll take good care of him.’

‘I want to be with him when you do that.’

Naylor sighs.

‘You know, Claire,’ she says, ‘I don’t think that’s a good idea.’

‘Why not? I think he’ll want me to be there.’ Claire stops, realising Evan won’t want her anywhere near. ‘But if you don’t think I should, I won’t. I suppose you know best.’

‘Can I say hello to him?’

‘You can try. Upstairs, first on the left. The one with the closed door.’

Naylor knows which room it is; she spent time here, in the early days, looking for anything which would help, finding nothing. The stickers on his door are as they were: *Call of Duty*, Man U, a New York Giants pennant held on with drawing pins. She listens at the door, but there’s nothing to hear.

She taps gently.

‘Evan? Evan, it’s Rachel Naylor, from the police. I just came to say hello.’

There’s the sound of bedsprings as he moves. She waits a minute or two, but there’s nothing more.

‘I have to go now, but I’ll be back in the next day or so. I’ll see you

then, OK?’

Back downstairs, Claire’s waiting to show her out.

‘What’s he doing in there?’ asks Naylor.

‘Sleeping, I think,’ says Claire. ‘They’ve given him something in place of the other stuff, but he’s still very tired. Apart from that, I don’t know. He’s not saying much.’

‘Just give it time,’ says Naylor, squeezing Claire’s arm. ‘He’s been through a lot.’

Outside, as she gets into the car, Naylor looks across at the Ferrerses’ house. All seems normal, but for one thing: it’s broad daylight, but the curtains at Evan’s windows are drawn.

FIFTEEN

27 June

‘Evan?’

Rose Yazici is in the interview room as an appropriate adult. Naylor likes Rose very much – she’s motherly but not mumsy, with an ability to connect with almost anyone, even Campbell. She’s pretty too, dark and petite in jewel-coloured clothes and bold jewellery which reflect her Turkish heritage. Her prettiness has to be a plus with a boy Evan’s age, surely? Naylor thought if anyone could get Evan to open up, it would be Rose. Turns out she was wrong.

Evan’s been in here with them almost an hour now, a book of photofits and photos of known offenders open on the table, with Rose slowly turning the pages and encouraging him to take his time, see if he spots anyone he recognises. Some of the faces are the stuff of parental nightmares – ugly, dirty old bastards with a lifetime’s offending behind them, obvious criminals you wouldn’t let anywhere near your child. And then there are the others: respectable, even attractive-looking men, some only in their twenties, far more dangerous in Naylor’s eyes than the old-timers. These younger men look friendly, trustworthy, like your next-door neighbour or your sister’s boyfriend. These are men you’d talk to, be pleased to find leading a scout group or after-school club, who you’d let join you and your kids in a Happy Meal without a second thought, but you’d shudder at the appetites they were stoking while they were watching your six-year-old eat her chicken nuggets.

Naylor would never say as much to Claire Ferrers, but Evan looks terrible. He’s pale and seems exhausted, as if he hasn’t slept for months (though Claire says he does nothing but sleep), and he looks uncomfortable in new clothes which don’t suit him, not because they’re not his size but because they’re not his age. He seems to be frozen in time as if he’s suffering from arrested development, so if Naylor didn’t know better she’d

have him down as a tall-for-his-age ten-year-old. The on-trend clothes Claire has bought him – trainers and chinos and T-shirts with the right logos – look like they’re from an older brother’s wardrobe, and Evan looks fearful as a whipped dog, like he’s expecting to take a thrashing at any moment.

‘How about this one?’ asks Rose. From her upside-down vantage point, Naylor recognises Danny Stokes, who’s been inside some time, so she’s not surprised when Evan doesn’t respond. Rose turns the page again, to two faces Naylor doesn’t recognise. She’s watching Evan closely and sees him blink, a slight flutter in his eyelids she hasn’t seen before. Hagen’s noticed Evan’s reaction too, and writes something in his notebook.

‘Evan?’ asks Naylor. ‘Do you know either of these men? If you think there’s even a chance you’ve seen either of them, please tell us.’

But Evan stays silent.

‘If you can help Sergeant Naylor at all,’ Rose puts in, ‘it could go a long way towards finding whoever took you. I know it’s hard, but your evidence is very important. Very important indeed.’

Naylor looks down at the photographs: two white men, one clean-shaven and in his thirties, the other older, with lank hair and an unkempt beard. Which one prompted Evan’s reaction?

‘If you identify any of these men, I guarantee we’ll keep you safe from them,’ says Rose. ‘They can’t hurt you any more, sweetheart. We’re all here to protect you.’

Evan looks at her, and there’s a cynicism in his eyes it disturbs Naylor to see. He doesn’t believe Rose, and why should he? If they were capable of protecting every child in their jurisdiction, he would never have been taken from that bus stop and subjected to the horrors he has yet to reveal.

Words are cheap, thinks Naylor. And who can blame poor Evan for being afraid to point the finger, when all it will do is bring the monsters back into his world?

SIXTEEN

29 June

‘So, says Campbell, rubbing his hands together as if he means business, but actually looking as if he’s feeling the cold. ‘What have we got?’

‘Just the car still,’ says Hagen, ‘and there’s nothing from that. Not yet, anyway.’

‘That beggars belief,’ says Campbell. ‘The boy was in the back of it, two abductors in the front, and there’s nothing to go on?’

‘I’m not saying there’s nothing at all,’ says Hagen. ‘Of course there are prints and DNA. Just nothing that ties in to anyone we know.’

‘The ANPR data hasn’t been much help either,’ says Naylor. ‘We’re thinking they must have switched cars shortly before we got them on the A61. But finding the car they abandoned – if there was one – is an impossibility. It could be anywhere, in a garage somewhere or under a tarpaulin. For all we know it’s crushed and gone by now.’

‘No soil samples, nothing like that?’

‘Nothing. All that tells us is they’ve been sticking to city driving.’

‘And what about the men themselves? How did they just vanish?’

Naylor shrugs.

‘It isn’t hard to do, Sir, if they split up and both found themselves a pub, sat for half an hour with a pint and called themselves a taxi. We’ve checked the CCTV at the rail and bus stations, nothing there. Appeals for information haven’t given us anything. Most likely someone came and picked them up.’

Campbell wanders over to where the coffee machine has just brewed a fresh pot. There’s an open biscuit tin which once held Scottish shortbread, recently filled by Rose with Oreos, and Campbell helps himself.

‘So what’s next? Rachel, how did your interview with Evan go?’

‘We did our best,’ says Naylor, ‘but he never said a word. The closest we came to any response were a couple of photos where I thought there was

something. Maybe, maybe not.'

'Worth a look though, surely, if we've nothing else? When are you bringing him back in?'

'With respect, Sir, I think we should leave it a while. He's so traumatised, it isn't ethical to keep chipping away at him. According to Claire Ferrers, he's little better than catatonic. He needs more time. Rose agrees with me.'

'I appreciate the boy's fragile,' says Campbell. 'And in an ideal world, we'd give him all the time and space he needs, but under the very pressing circumstances I think we have to push him. Bring him back in and try again. What else have you got?'

'The car's the obvious one,' says Hagen. 'We need to make sure we've exhausted everything there. And I agree we could take a look at the photos which caused a reaction, if a reaction it was. The thing is, it's impossible to say whether our photos might just have reminded him of someone. They might both be complete dead ends.'

'We only need one break though, don't we, people?' says Campbell cheerfully. He helps himself to another biscuit. 'One for the road, if no one minds. My meeting with the Chief Constable over-ran and I never got any lunch. Anyway, keep me up to date.'

The incident room door closes behind Campbell's back.

'A little pep-talk like that always makes me feel better,' says Hagen with heavy sarcasm.

'Makes it all worthwhile,' says Naylor. 'Which do you fancy, the mugshots or the car? If you've no preference, I'll take the car. I got halfway through the forensics last night before I was interrupted by a large glass of wine and an urgent need to sleep. But I've started, so I think I ought to finish.'

'Happy reading, then. I suppose that leaves me with the known offenders. Any idea who they are?'

'Not local, that's all I know. Looks like you might be clocking up some expenses.'

'Every little helps.'

'Has it struck you how none of this seems to be local, Brad?'

‘In what way?’

‘Everything seems to be geographically randomised, like there’s a deliberate effort to keep elements apart.’

They both glance at the map of the British Isles on one of the incident room whiteboards, where the number of coloured pins denoting significant events seems to be growing.

‘If I were abducting children, I’d be doing my best to make it look randomised too,’ says Hagen. ‘But if we keep sticking pins in the map, maybe a pattern will emerge. Remember what Uncle Ron used to say. Nothing in these cases is ever unconnected. Find enough pointers, and we’ll be able to join the dots.’

SEVENTEEN

30 June

Hagen finds the address he's looking for in the suburbs of Wolverhampton, a few hundred metres off the A449. The district he's in is called Merridale, a name which seems particularly inapt given the size of the cemetery featuring on the satnav as he makes his way through the streets of solid brick houses.

The place he's looking for is a well-kept bungalow, lace curtains at the windows and a sunroom at the front, cast-iron gates with the finials of its struts painted gold. At the edges of the block-paved drive the snapdragons and lobelia in the flowerbeds seem to be receiving reasonable care. A wooden fence separates the garden from a public footpath, where tatters of old litter have gathered at the foot of a *No Cycling* sign.

This street doesn't look like cycling territory to Hagen. The kerbsides are close-parked with vehicles, mostly cheap family motors and runabouts with the odd drug dealer's favourite amongst them, pimped Beamers and a slammed Golf.

As he parks across the bungalow's driveway, there's a view of the city centre in the distance, marked by a scatter of tower blocks and a grime-blackened church tower. The gate squeals as he pushes it open, and a hand lifts a corner of the net curtains. Naylor's taught Hagen to ignore doorbells, so he raps on the glass door, which is opened promptly by a woman he puts in her forties. She's made an attempt at urban glamour – her hair's home-dyed a shade of burgundy and her glasses are sixties-style and cherry red – but grey roots are showing through the hair dye, and there's no on-trend logo on her hoody or sweatpants. Hagen picks up the stink of cigarettes, so potent she must have just put one out.

'Yes?'

She looks quite amenable, until Hagen flips open his wallet and shows his warrant card.

‘What, again?’ she protests. ‘Why can’t you leave us alone? It’s like living in an episode of *The Bill*.’

Her accent to his ears is pure Brummie, though he knows that’s the same ignorance as people not knowing the difference between Geordie and Mackem or Smoggy.

‘I’m looking for Robert Gillard. Is he in?’

‘He’s not in, no, but he’s entitled to be out. Seven till seven, that’s his curfew hours.’

‘And you are . . .?’

‘I’m Madge, his sister. Marjorie to you. What are you doing back here? We had a probation visit only last week. He’s keeping to his terms and conditions. Ask the neighbours if you don’t believe me.’

‘Do you know where I might find him, Marjorie?’

‘Do I have to tell you?’

‘I can come in and wait if you’d rather.’

She gives a pantomime sigh.

‘He’s at the library, studying for his qualification. Why won’t you people even give him a chance? He had a rotten start in life which you would know if you could be bothered to find out. We both had rotten starts, and you ought to give him breathing space to do something with his life instead of coming round here drawing attention all the time. We’ve Mum to think of, haven’t we? It’s no bloody picnic being uprooted at her age. It’ll all be down to you if we have to move again.’

‘I hope it won’t come to that,’ says Hagen. ‘But with the kind of offences your brother committed, by law people have a right to know – if they choose to find out – that he might pose a danger. How do I get to the library?’

‘It’s a good walk, and he has to walk, doesn’t he? We’ve no car, how could we afford a car? He hasn’t a snowball in hell’s chance of getting a job with his record. There’s only my wage and his benefits and Mum’s pension. It’s no bloody picnic, I’ll tell you. Straight down there to the shopping centre, it’s in there. And when you find him, ask him to pick me up a packet of fags on his way home.’

The library is a light, modern building, its noticeboard splashed with

posters advertising toddler story-times, knit-and-natter afternoons and a weekly board-game group, free tea and coffee, come and meet new friends.

Behind the desk a librarian in an electric wheelchair glances at Hagen before going back to her carping account of how she's been stiffed on holiday pay. On the receiving end, her colleague appears bored. In the kindergarten section, a small child sits on its mother's knee, sucking its thumb as she reads a story, both mother and child unperturbed by another child shouting for attention as he plunders the contents of a toy box.

The computer section is at the back of the room, through a gap in the stacks between Biography and Local History. A man is sitting at a terminal, engrossed in whatever is displaying on the screen. As Hagen walks towards him, the man senses movement, and without looking up, hits a single key on the keyboard. By the time Hagen's standing behind him, the monitor's showing the front page of *Betfred*.

'Robert Gillard?'

'Who's asking?' Gillard folds his skinny arms across his chest. His accent's the same as his sister's but he's younger than her, dressed anonymously as she was in jeans and chain-store trainers and a grey T-shirt printed in red with the words *Why Wait?* A beige windcheater not quite old enough to be vintage – a dead man's jacket from a charity shop – is draped on the back of his chair.

Hagen flashes his warrant card, and in disgust, Gillard shakes his head. He looks up at Hagen with feral animosity in his rat-like face.

'She tell you I was here, did she? Stupid cow. She hasn't the brains to keep it shut.'

'Are you allowed to be here, Bobby? How many conditions are you breaking? Unsupervised access to a computer and close proximity to children? It doesn't look good, does it?'

'I don't think I know you, do I? You new or something?'

'I'm from out of area,' says Hagen. 'Your name's come up in regard to an investigation. Have you been out of town recently?'

'Do me a favour!' Gillard spits the words. 'How could I, when you've as good as got me chained here? I was better off inside. At least in there I didn't have them two nagging me night and day. My life's not worth living

and that's the truth.'

'Having a flutter on the horses, are you?'

'Just a couple of quid. It passes the time. There's nothing against that in my conditions.'

'I don't suppose there is,' says Hagen. 'But with those youngsters the other side of that wall, I think it's time you took yourself home, don't you? I'll wait while you pack up.'

At the bottom of the screen, Hagen can see there are two Google windows open on the machine. Gillard hits the power button, and the computer begins to shut itself down. Pulling on his windcheater, he leads the way towards the exit, pushes open the door and lets it swing back in Hagen's face before walking away towards the shopping centre.

'Your sister wants you to take her a packet of cigarettes,' Hagen calls after him, and Gillard sticks a finger in the air.

From the information which comes through from the DVLA, Naylor learns the Focus has had three owners, all women. She studies the addresses but can see nothing there. Sevenoaks, Chelmsford, Woking. The most recent keeper – in Chelmsford – seems as good a place as any to start.

Essex is a county she doesn't know except for its trashy TV fame, and she puts her trust in the satnav as it guides her round the M25 to junction 28 and along the A12 past Brentwood. Once she's off the A12, she finds herself on the grandiosely named Essex Yeomanry Way – a bypass by another name – and from there drives into Great Baddow, a place whose origins as a pretty village are still visible despite the opportunistic development on every square metre of available space.

The house she's looking for turns out to be one of the new-builds – a townhouse at the end of a cul-de-sac, white-rendered and with ridiculously tiny windows both upstairs and down, which could surely have made sense in an architect's mind only as a means to frustrate the neighbours' peeping. Attached to the house are two parking spaces, one of them occupied by a Hyundai hatchback with a disabled sticker on the rear windscreen.

Naylor parks in the vacant space and unlocks her phone. There are a couple of new emails, but nothing so far from Hagen in Wolverhampton. She checks her face in the rear-view mirror, applies lipstick and climbs

from the car.

She doesn't use the doorbell. When doorbells don't get answered, it's impossible to know whether that's because there's no one home, or the individual she's looking for is heading out the back door as she's standing at the front, or maybe the bell is broken. Knuckles eliminate the last possibility. She raps on the glass, and immediately a dog begins to bark – a yappy terrier, her least favourite kind. Within a moment, a woman's ineffectually telling it to be quiet, but the dog's ignoring her, scratching at the door to get at the visitor. Naylor hears muttering, the rattle of keys, and a firmer order for the dog to go to its bed. Surprisingly, the barking stops as it complies. A key turns in the lock, and a chain is taken off the latch.

The woman who opens the door is enormously overweight. The journey down the hallway seems to have winded her, and she's breathing as heavily as if she'd run a mile, leaning on a stick held in a hand wearing three diamond rings, all pressing into the flesh of her fingers to such a degree, Naylor thinks they must be painful. And yet she might be attractive; she looks no more than forty, and she's made an effort with her hair and clothes, which, though voluminous, are all matched as an outfit.

Naylor holds up her ID.

'Mrs Birch? Sheila Birch? DS Rachel Naylor, Thames Valley Police. Do you mind if I have a word?'

'Police?' asks Mrs Birch. 'What's it about?'

'Just a routine enquiry. May I come in?'

Sheila Birch holds open the door, and Naylor steps inside. The house is beautifully kept, the carpets vacuumed, the paintwork freshly white, with a strong scent of lavender potpourri from a bowl on the sill of the tiny hall window.

'We can go in the lounge,' says Mrs Birch, limping and wheezing as she leads the way. 'I've put Oscar in the kitchen. He's not very good with visitors.'

'Sounds like he makes a good guard-dog.'

'He's a Jack Russell and all mouth. He doesn't even come up to my knee, and I'm not tall. I don't suppose anyone would find him very scary. Have a seat.'

Sighing with effort and breathlessness, she lowers herself into a fireside chair which appears to be of abnormally large proportions. On a side table, she has all her home comforts: the TV remote, a Samsung tablet, a mobile phone in a candy-pink case dotted with fake gems. Naylor takes a seat opposite, in a normal-sized armchair. Mrs Birch props her stick against the chair arm and looks expectantly at Naylor.

‘I’ve a few questions, if I may, regarding a vehicle you own which was recently reported stolen. An 09-plate Ford Focus. Is that your car?’

‘Well, yes and no. It’s my name on the paperwork, but it’s Brian who generally drives it. I have the Hyundai which is better for my needs.’

‘Brian being?’

‘My husband.’

‘And you’ve owned the car how long?’

‘I should say it’s about eighteen months since he bought it. Brian wanted a workhorse – as he put it – and he really rates his Fords. I preferred the newer model – I think it looks sportier, more modern – but he wasn’t so keen. He thought it would leave his samples exposed if he had to leave them in the car. The model he bought has the full boot, which I suppose is more secure.’

‘What samples, Mrs Birch? What does your husband do?’

‘He sells compressed air, pneumatics, things like that. He’s what they used to call a rep, a travelling salesman. The stuff he sells is quite specialised, so he covers a big area. He travels all over the country seeing customers.’

‘And how long has he been doing that?’

‘A while. Is this about Brian or the car? I’m surprised you’re taking such an interest. I assumed gone was gone, and that’d be an end to it. You haven’t found it, have you? Only we’ve started the insurance claim. I’ll be disappointed to be honest if you have. I was hoping we might get something newer.’

‘We have found it, yes, but that doesn’t mean your insurance claim will be invalid. The car was involved in a criminal offence, so we’ll be hanging on to it for a while longer yet.’

‘A crime? What sort of crime?’

‘I’m afraid I can’t say.’

‘Does that mean you’ve got Brian’s samples? Was there anything in the boot?’

‘I’m afraid not, no.’

‘I expect they’ve sold them. Some of his stuff must be worth good money.’

Naylor is finding Mrs Birch’s wheezing disconcerting, like sitting opposite a vastly oversized pug.

‘Where was the car when it was stolen, Mrs Birch?’

‘I don’t know, exactly. I wasn’t there, was I? You’d have to ask Brian. Haven’t you got that information from when he reported it?’

‘Where did he tell you it was?’

‘He was in Hartlepool. He goes there regularly. They’re doing a lot with wind farms up there and Brian’s company’s involved in all that.’

‘And what company is that?’

Mrs Birch scowls.

‘I don’t see what that has to do with anything. He’ll have told the police up there where it was taken from. Don’t you people talk to each other? I can give you the incident number if you don’t have it. I needed it for the insurance.’

‘I already have that, thank you. We’re just trying to establish where the car was between when it was taken and when it was found. It makes it easier for us to narrow the field of suspects. Who did you say your husband works for?’

‘Petersen Hydraulics. Petersen with an “e”.’

‘They sound foreign.’

‘Dutch.’

‘And they have offices in Hartlepool as well as here in Chelmsford?’

‘I don’t think so. He was seeing a customer up there. But I don’t see why that’s of interest. I just need to know where we stand with the insurance.’

‘If they’re an international company, don’t they offer their reps company cars?’

‘They do in the normal way of things. But Brian preferred to have the

money instead, and sort a car out for himself. It works out better for us financially, in the long run. Anyway, he's a bit fickle with cars, always chopping and changing. He's got a couple of others he keeps at a friend's yard, old things he calls his projects. He wasn't heartbroken to see the back of this one, I don't think.'

'Did it give him trouble, then?'

'Oh no. It was always reliable. Fords, they just keep going, don't they? No, he just likes a change. He's always been that way, ever since I've known him.'

'So what's he driving now?'

'Something someone lent him as a stopgap. A Vauxhall, I think. Blue. Or is it silver?'

'If you don't mind me asking, if he's so keen on his Fords, how come you have a Hyundai?'

'It's better suited to my needs. I have it through the Motability scheme.'

Naylor nods.

'I see. I wonder if I could speak to your husband? Is he likely to be home this afternoon?'

'I'm not expecting him today, no. I don't think he'll be home before Friday.'

'Do you have a number I could contact him on?'

'I've got his mobile.'

'That would be great, thank you. And can I have your number here, just in case?'

Mrs Birch recites two numbers which Naylor notes down.

'Well, thanks for your time. I'll give you a card. Your husband's welcome to ring me if I don't get to him first.'

'What about the insurance?'

'I suggest you ring them and explain the situation. They'll tell you how to proceed. Please, don't get up. I'll see myself out.'

When she sees Naylor drive away, Sheila picks up her phone and dials.

'Hello, babe,' Brian Birch answers. 'How're you doing?'

There's noise in the background, the murmur of traffic and tyres on tarmac.

‘Oh, I’m all right,’ she says, and sighs. ‘Tired.’

‘You take it easy, lady. What’re you up to today?’

‘Not much. Where are you?’

‘According to the sign I’ve just passed, I’m not too far from Rotherham.’

‘What’re you doing there?’

‘You know me, babe. I go where the money is.’

‘Will you be home soon?’

‘A couple more days. Thursday or Friday.’

‘I just had a visitor. She said she’ll be ringing you.’

‘Who’s that, then?’

‘A woman from the police. About the Focus.’ There’s a moment of silence. ‘Brian? Are you there?’

‘Yes, I’m here. Bad signal. What about the Focus?’

‘She says they’ve found it, but she didn’t say where. I asked her about the insurance, but she said I have to ring them to sort it out. She said they won’t be giving the car back any time soon. Apparently it’s been used in a crime.’

‘What crime?’

‘She wouldn’t say. They haven’t found your stuff, though. She’d come all the way from Thames Valley.’

‘Thames Valley? What have they got to do with it?’

‘How should I know? Anyway, she’s going to ring you. She wants to know where it was taken from, though I told her you’d given them all the details when you reported it stolen. I said I thought it was Hartlepool. Was I right?’

‘Thereabouts. Did you give her this number?’

‘Yes.’

‘I’d better get off the phone, then, hadn’t I?’

‘I’ll ring you later, shall I?’

‘You do that,’ says Birch. ‘Love you. Gotta go.’

He ends the call, and drives on grim-faced. Traffic news comes on the radio, with reports of hold-ups at junction 33 on the M1, in the Rotherham area.

But Birch's Vauxhall is on an urban dual carriageway where traffic is running freely, and the next exit is signposted Aylesbury. Above the road noise, something is rattling in the boot.

There's a lay-by coming up and he pulls into it. On the seat beside him there's another phone, a cheap, low-function pay-as-you-go similar to the one he's just been speaking on. Using the second phone, he dials a number from the contacts book, tapping the steering-wheel with impatience while it rings out.

'What's up?'

The voice that's answered is terse.

'We might have a problem.'

'What problem?'

'I'm expecting a call from the filth.'

A silence. Then, 'What're you talking about?'

'Sheila gave them my number. They're asking questions about the car.'

There's a sigh of relief.

'Is that all? I thought it was something serious. How can they not ask questions about the car? They're just joining the dots. Even they're not so stupid as to ignore a gift like that. Just stay calm and stick to the story. They've got nothing on you, so you give them their DNA samples and their dabs if they want them and let them eliminate you from their enquiries.'

'I'm not happy giving them DNA.'

'And if you refuse? Then they'll really show an interest.'

Birch bites his lip.

'Yeah, I suppose you're right.'

'Don't sweat it, Brian. Cross that bridge when you come to it. Maybe they won't ask. Meantime, just stick with the script.'

'Right. But what if—'

He doesn't get to finish his sentence. The man he's calling has hung up.

Naylor has a policy always to accept coffee if it's offered. People speak more freely when they're occupied with filling kettles and finding milk. But Sheila Birch disappointed, and hadn't even thought to make the offer. Now Naylor's thirsty, and she could eat something, too.

It's in her mind to pay a visit to Brian Birch's employers, Petersen's,

thinking she'll get confirmation of Birch's work for them in Hartlepool. She's not expecting to learn anything which will be a great help, but she's been trained by Ron Perdue, and graduated from his No Stone Unturned school of thinking. As a member of the public who's had his car nicked, Brian Birch may be an unlikely stone, but he still needs turning over. For completeness's sake, she might as well do it while she's here.

She Googles Petersen's and gets an address from their website, then keys it into the satnav. She's a ten-minute drive away, depending on traffic. A couple of streets from the Birches' house, there's a row of shops with a boutique café in the middle. Naylor finds a place to park and dials the number Sheila Birch has given her.

The call is answered promptly.

'Hello?'

'Is that Mr Birch, Brian Birch?'

'That's me.'

'This is DI Rachel Naylor, from Thames Valley Police. I was just speaking to your wife regarding the theft of your vehicle, a red 09-plate Ford Focus.'

'Oh yes?'

'We've recovered the vehicle, Mr Birch, but as I explained to your wife, unfortunately we can't return it to you as it's been involved in a crime. I've just got a couple of questions to put to you, if you don't mind, regarding the actual loss of the vehicle.'

'Ask away.'

'Can you confirm where it was taken from? Our information says Hartlepool, is that correct?'

'Yes.'

'And you were there on business, is that right?'

'Yes.'

'And what were the circumstances of the theft, exactly?'

'I left it parked at the roadside. When I came back, it wasn't there.'

A thought occurs to Naylor.

'So how did you proceed, Mr Birch? How did you get home or to your office, wherever you were going?'

There's noise on the line, the sound in the background of an indicator flashing.

'I'm sorry, it's a bad line,' says Birch. 'Can you repeat the question?'

'I asked what you used for transport when you found the car was gone.'

'I called a taxi.'

'And he took you where?'

'The station. I got the train home. Cost me an arm and a leg, it did. I should have got the insurance to stump up for that.'

'Was that Hartlepool station?'

Naylor hears a few seconds of empty static.

'I'm sorry,' Birch says at last, 'you're breaking up again.'

'Hartlepool. Was it Hartlepool?'

'Yes, Hartlepool. Took me into Euston and I found my own way easy enough from there. Look, I'm sorry but I'm just going into a meeting. Is there anything else I can help you with?'

'No, thanks, you've been very helpful,' says Naylor. 'Thanks for your time.'

When the call's ended, Birch turns into a residential side street and finds a space to park. Picking up the phone he's just been speaking on, he copies a couple of entries from the contacts book into the second pay-as-you-go, before removing the back of the first phone and taking out the SIM.

The battery and the casing are easily separated. He tosses both into the passenger footwell, puts the car into gear and drives away.

The café's all on-trend retro, duck-egg-blue paint and artisan breads, a menu board of coffee beans from South America and the Caribbean. It's the kind of place Hagen hates, and she's glad he's not with her; he would have gone in the chip shop two doors down. But Naylor's pleased to choose from sandwich options which include hummus and green olive ciabatta. She plumps for that with tapenade and turkey, and asks them to add some chipotle mayo to make it interesting. She gets a bottle of water and a Costa Rican flat white to drink, but resists the white chocolate brownies for the sake of her waistline and her purse.

She finds an empty corner table with a good view of the street, where she can watch the comings and goings of kids in school uniform buying

lunch at the chippy and the newsagent's. Some of them are young, about the age Evan was when he was taken, and too many of them seem obsessed with their phones. Naylor's all too aware of the dangers that lurk behind those screens and buttons: predators, groomers, the creeping and irrevocable loss of innocence. No wonder clued-up Silicon Valley bosses are sending their children to schools where technology is banned. When parents first gave kids phones, their main reason was for safety, but Evan's phone did nothing to save him. It disappeared and went silent only minutes after he went missing, switched off and no doubt chucked in some river or dropped down a drain.

Walking back to the car after lunch, she checks her own phone again. Still nothing from Hagen, but as she starts the engine, the phone rings. She glances at the hands-free screen on the dashboard and sees a number she knows well, unidentified by a name. She presses a button to accept the call.

'Rachel? It's me.'

She doesn't speak.

'Rachel, are you there?'

'I'm here.'

'Are you still mad at me?'

'I'm not mad at you, I'm mad at me, for being such a mug.'

'Look, I'm sorry about what happened. It was just one of those things, you know?'

'Don't tell me. I don't want to know.'

'Can we talk about it? Where are you now? I've got a couple of hours.'

'Are you serious? I should just drop everything, right now this minute? I have a job, remember?'

'Play truant. Let's both play truant.'

'And where's she? Sainsbury's?'

'She's in London. She won't be back till late.'

Naylor considers whether to say what she's got to say, whether to blow the whole thing out of the water.

'Book a hotel, then,' she says. 'Somewhere nice. And stay the night.'

'I can't stay the night,' he says. 'You know that. But I was thinking we could meet at yours. I'll bring a bottle of something you'll like.'

‘So let me translate. You’re too cheap to pay for a hotel, or you just don’t want it on your credit card bill. What you’re after is a quick shag this afternoon while your missus is away, as long as you can be back home at the usual time, smiling like nothing’s going on. Well, you know what? Go screw yourself.’

When she’s ended the call, she switches off the phone. There’s a tightness in her stomach which might be anger and might be hurt. She doesn’t think he’ll call again, for which part of her is relieved and another part is close to tears. Either way, she’s no appetite now for anything but a reflective drive with the music cranked up loud.

The satnav’s set for Petersen’s, but she soon changes that, re-setting it with the postcode of home.

By the time Hagen gets to Mansfield, it’s the wrong side of lunchtime. On the through route he’s following he spots Nick’s Chippy, which is still busy, and, taking that as a vote of local confidence, buys fish, chips and curry sauce and eats them in the car.

There’s still plenty of old back-to-back housing in the town, red-brick terraces which line backstreets looking little different to when they were built. Mansfield’s foundations were in mining, and since mining got the heart kicked out of it, the town’s found no way to thrive. The only businesses doing well seem to be takeaways and convenience stores.

Alan Mayhew’s house is a mid-terrace which stands out from its neighbours for its lack of improvements: no double-glazed front door, no skylight in the attic, no window boxes or fake stone cladding. When Hagen knocks, a neighbour answers, throwing open her own door as if she’s the one he wants.

‘He’s not in, duck!’ She’s heavy-set, a bruiser, her brash Nottinghamshire accent as thick as slurry. ‘He’ll not be back while three.’

‘Where is he, then?’ asks Hagen, and she points to the end of the street.

‘The White Hart, duck,’ she says. ‘Every day, twelve while three.’

The pub’s what the Lamb and Lion used to be before the brewery’s gentrification: sticky bottle-green carpets, ugly brown tables and chairs, an indifferent landlord reading a newspaper behind the bar. Hagen pays a quick visit to the cold and draughty toilets, where there’s no hot water on the

basins and the hand-dryer is broken.

In the tap-room Mayhew's easy to pick out, drinking alone at a corner table holding four brown bottles and a glass. He's trimmed his beard since the booking photo was taken, but even in the gloom, Hagen sees his health has deteriorated, his skin tinted yellow with encroaching jaundice. His head sags, and his eyelids are fluttering in a half-doze.

As Hagen approaches the bar, the landlord folds his paper and rises from his stool.

'Now then, youth,' he says. 'What can I get you?'

'Nothing for me, thanks,' says Hagen. 'I was hoping for a word with Mr Mayhew.'

He nods to where Mayhew is sitting.

'Which are you, then, bailiffs or coppers?' asks the landlord. 'Not that it matters. Whichever you are, you're two hours too late. If you want to get any sense out of him, come back tomorrow.'

'Is he drunk?'

'He's one of those drinkers who's never quite drunk, but he's close enough to it. Four barley wines'll do that to a man. You ever tried a barley wine?'

'I don't think so, no,' says Hagen.

'If you've never had a barley wine, be grateful. My grandad used to reckon it was the best stuff you could use for getting a good shine on brass and I've never had reason to doubt it. And see there all the good it's done old Alan. His liver's shot but he's a creature of habit, four bottles a day, come hell or high water, with a whisky chaser or two if he's feeling flush. He says he drinks for the pain, but we could all say that in Mansfield.'

'He's in here every day?'

'Every day without fail. Mostly he's there waiting when I open up. Come closing time, I show him the door and he totters away home to sleep it off. So like I say, whatever your business is with him, you've come too late today. If you want to get any sense out of him, you'll have to come back before he's downed his first bottle tomorrow.'

EIGHTEEN

1 July

Feeling guilty for driving straight home from Chelmsford the previous day, Naylor is early for work. In the office, she notices Rose's biscuit tin is empty, and she wonders if Campbell has been hanging around again, chivvying for results. She switches on Ron's coffee maker, and as she's pouring in the water she thinks about him, deciding that she ought to get in touch.

Hagen arrives soon after her, an earplug in one ear from the phone in his pocket, so the first time she wishes him good morning he doesn't hear. She walks over to him and waves a hand in front of his face until he removes the earplug and switches off the music.

'Good morning.'

'Morning,' Hagen replies.

'I'm just making coffee, but there're no biscuits,' she says. 'Was Campbell on the rampage again yesterday?'

'I have no clue. I was late back, so I went straight home to a shower and a cold beer.'

'How did you get on?'

'Fifty-fifty,' says Hagen. 'Mayhew's alibied indefinitely by chronic alcoholism and a pub full of witnesses to his daily habits, so put a line through him. Gillard I'm not sure about.'

'You want coffee?' Naylor leads the way back to the machine, which is just finishing its perking, and Hagen follows her. She passes him an almost-clean mug, takes one for herself and pours. In the countertop fridge, there's hardly any milk.

'You have it,' says Hagen. 'I'll go black.'

Naylor smiles. There's nothing black about Hagen with his Nordic blood. In summer, his blond hair is at its fairest.

'So come on,' she says. 'What aren't you sure about?'

‘From what I saw, Gillard was breaching his licence. I found him in a library, apparently indulging in a bit of online gaming. But full and free access to the internet must be out of bounds. And there were children in the library. I sent him on his way, and I think it’s fair to say he wasn’t happy. At the very least we should be notifying Probation. How about you?’

Naylor pulls a face. ‘I think I ticked a box. I spoke to the Focus’s legal owner, but she says she never drove it, that her old man used it for work. Apparently, it was nicked while he was making sales calls in Hartlepool. So I spoke to him to get his story, which sounded straightforward – a taxi and a train back down south.’

‘But?’

‘But what?’

‘Something’s niggling you.’

‘It’s a tiny, tiny niggle.’ Naylor shows a minute gap between her finger and thumb-pad. ‘So tiny, I don’t even know what it is.’

‘Heads up, people!’

Campbell breezes into the incident room in a white shirt straight off the hanger from an ironing service, with an air of excitement about him which can only mean he’s been speaking to the Chief Constable. Officers end calls and sign off keyboards.

Naylor notices Campbell do a quick eyeball of the biscuit tin, which Rose has only moments before refilled with shortbread fingers.

‘OK, so I regret to say we’re having an immediate change of priorities.’ There’s an undertone of a groan around the room. Naylor and Hagen’s eyes meet. Campbell’s upbeat attitude suggests an increase in workload, and has all the hallmarks of a paid-overtime authorisation. ‘In the absence of solid leads on the Ferrers case, the CC has asked for a diversion of resources – temporary only, I’m pleased to say – on to the Foxley Wood Road shooting. It’s a high-priority case as we all know, and we’re looking for a quick result. There’s an immediate cancellation of all non-essential leave and authorisation for paid overtime, so if you want to bank some cash for Christmas, now’s your chance.’

Ian Austin – a recently married DC – is scowling.

‘What about my holiday, Sir?’ he asks. ‘I’m booked to fly in two days’

time, and my missus will start divorce proceedings if I can't go.'

'She'd be doing that anyway, if she'd any sense,' chips in Dallabrida.

'You'd better go,' says Campbell, and Austin grins. 'We don't need any more blood spilled on our patch, do we?'

It's one of Campbell's favourite gags, and they all dutifully smile.

'What about the leads we have got on the Ferrers case, Sir?' asks Hagen. 'Can we keep someone going on those? I don't think we should just drop everything. We've got Evan booked in for another interview this afternoon.'

'That should go ahead, of course,' says Campbell. 'Naylor, you handle that with Rose.' He looks around the room. 'Anyone got anything else? If so, pass it on to Hagen. Bradley, you run with the loose ends for a couple of days, and if there's nothing new, we'll have to wind it down, at least for the time being.'

'And what if we get anything new from Evan?' asks Naylor. 'If we finally get him to open up?'

'That would put a different face on it, of course,' says Campbell. 'But if he still won't talk and we've nothing solid by the end of the week, we've other high-priority cases we need to focus on. We all know how it is. Resources are tight.'

Naylor and Rose are attempting a different line with Evan – no recording equipment, no photographs – trying to make the interview feel like a casual conversation between three people who would never in the normal run of things find themselves in the same room. The way Evan's sitting on his hands gives him a peculiar bashfulness more suited to a child half his age, and his rounded shoulders make him look as if he's cowering, which inside he most likely is. Naylor's feeling guilty for making him be here. She and Rose both know emotionally he's not fit, and without Campbell's insistence, they'd have left him sleeping in the safety of his bedroom.

Naylor begins with an apology.

'We're sorry to drag you in again, Evan. I know you don't want to be here. But the fact is, with your type of case, I'm afraid there's a very good chance that the men who took you will target other boys. We want to stop

that happening, but to do that, we really need your help. Will you help us, Evan?’

Evan lifts his eyes, and Naylor sees in them his distress tangled up with mistrust and panic as if he’s still a prisoner inside his own head. His lips are pressed together and his jaw’s determinedly set, and Naylor knows making him break his silence will be next to impossible.

‘Any little detail, Evan,’ she says. ‘Anything at all. Do you remember what colour the walls were painted?’

Silence.

‘Was there traffic outside? Could you hear cars? Were there curtains at the windows? What colour were they?’

Silence.

‘What did you have to eat? Did you have chips? Did anyone give you chocolate? What’s your favourite chocolate, anyway? I’ll tell you what, I love creme eggs. Can’t resist them. Every year I can’t wait for Christmas to be over so the creme eggs’ll be in the shops.’

‘My son,’ says Rose. ‘He loves Galaxy. If I buy any I have to hide it, or I don’t get any, not a single square. What about you, Evan?’

Silence.

Rose has a pad of paper in front of her, and a wallet of felt-tip pens in attractive colours. She pushes the paper and pens across the table.

‘Maybe you could draw us something, Evan. Something you remember from where you were, what the room looked like, something you could see, anything at all you can remember. You choose something and draw it for us.’

Silence.

Naylor’s running out of ideas. Under the table she touches Rose’s foot with her toe, hoping to prompt her into saying more.

But Rose is biding her time and doesn’t react. The silence grows long, and as it lengthens, it absorbs the pressure they’re all feeling and becomes more comfortable. Then Evan reaches out, draws the paper towards him and, opening up the wallet, chooses a pen with bright red ink.

Uncapping the pen, he positions the tip in the top left-hand corner of the paper and, forming the biggest letters the sheet will hold, slowly and

deliberately writes a single word: NO.

He seems somehow pleased with it. Turning the page, he writes it again: NO.

The third time he writes it, he scribbles an underline, pressing so hard with the pen, he rips the paper.

NO NO NO.

Naylor stares at the torn paper and thinks what Rose asked him to do, to draw something he remembers.

‘I think that’s enough for today, sweetheart,’ says Rose quietly.

Naylor’s only too happy to agree. The guilt she was feeling has trebled, and she knows she’s let Evan down. On his behalf, she should have stood up to Campbell, and never allowed this interview to take place.

NINETEEN

10 August

Claire pours the last of the Chablis into her glass. On the TV, someone on *EastEnders* is shouting at someone else, and it occurs to her she's no idea who these characters are. It isn't that she's lost track of the plot, more that she's never cared, and all it's ever been – for weeks and months – is background noise she took for company. But shouting isn't company, and even after a glass or two of wine, she's switched on enough to realise that people shouting isn't what Evan needs to hear, even at the remove of his bedroom. She has a thought, that maybe it would be nice to watch something together – something funny, or David Attenborough, or he used to enjoy *Top Gear*.

She goes to the foot of the stairs. Upstairs is silent and the landing is dark, so she switches on the light; if Evan needs the bathroom, she doesn't want him to open his door on to darkness. She thinks of calling up to him, of trying to persuade him to come down, but she knows he'll be reluctant. What, in any case, is the point? Maybe he'll come and sit with her, but he won't speak. He's living inside his head, hiding from them all, coming down for food and leaving when he's eaten. On good days, he touches her shoulder as he goes – maybe as a thank you – before heading back upstairs to shut himself away.

Has she had one glass or two? Did she open the bottle this evening as she was making Evan's tea or was it already open in the fridge? She takes a sip. The wine is unpleasant – sour and warmed to room temperature. Maybe a couple of ice cubes will make it more drinkable.

She wanders to the kitchen. Behind her, the distinctive music over the final credits begins, so it must be 8.30 p.m. Can that be right? So why is Matt not home? The kitchen clock confirms the time, and Claire is suddenly worried. The memory of the night that Evan went missing comes back to her: the slow sinking in of the undeniable truth, the hopeless wait for the

ending of anxiety, the dark cloud of despair as reality was faced. Maybe Matt's been in an accident. Should she be ringing hospitals? She takes ice cubes from the freezer and drops them in her drink. Of course he's fine. There'll have been some hold-up on the roads. If he's passing Sainsbury's, he could pick up a bottle of wine. And a ready meal from their chiller cabinets, or he could bring a takeaway. They haven't had Chinese in ages. He could call in there.

But what if . . .? Does history repeat itself? Does lightning strike twice? Of course it does, every day. She dials his number, but his phone is busy, and though he's got call waiting, he doesn't take her call. In the next ten minutes, she tries twice more. Matt's number is still engaged.

Twenty minutes later he walks in the door, and it's as if he's read her mind. He's carrying a bottle of white wine, and a carrier bag from the Golden Wok.

Now he's safely home, she doesn't care enough about his lateness to nag, but what else is there to say?

'You're late.'

He puts his lips on her cheek, but holds his body away from her, seeming reluctant to be touched.

'Traffic,' he says. 'Nightmare.' He holds up the bag of takeaway. The smell is savoury, garlicky and good, and her stomach rumbles. 'I thought you wouldn't have eaten.' He puts the bottle in her hand, and she feels a flash of anger, that he thinks she can be appeased with such a humble prize. But he's right, she can be, and she is. 'Singapore noodles, king prawns with ginger and spring onions and veggie spring rolls. You go and sit. I'll bring it through.'

They eat in silence, letting Channel 4 do the talking, one of those social issues documentaries that Matt enjoys. Claire doesn't give a damn what's on; the food's tasty, and when she's finished her wine, another bottle's waiting. She may not drink more anyway. Half the comfort lies in knowing that if she wanted to, she could.

She takes a swallow and feels its acidity running down her gullet, and moments later there's the little top-up to her alcoholic buzz. Too late, she regrets it, because she realises it's the mouthful that's going to make her say

something unpredictable, so unpredictable even she has no idea what it's going to be.

'Matt.' His attention broken, he looks across at her, and she realises he wasn't focused on the TV at all. The presenter rattles on, and Matt's not glancing back at him. Wherever his mind was, it wasn't with Channel 4. 'Why don't you just tell me what's going on?'

She's as surprised at the question as he is, and taken aback by her sudden knowledge that of course something's going on. If she wasn't living in a befuddled daze every evening, they'd have had this conversation long ago. All she's done with her comfort drinking is make it easy for him to take his comfort elsewhere.

'What do you mean?' Of course he would ask that, stalling for time, fishing to find out what she knows, or thinks she knows.

'Oxford, Schmoxford,' she says, and there's a slight slur in her speech. 'What's her name?'

'Don't be silly,' he says, and seems to give his attention back to the TV. Being called silly stings; her mother used to say it, and it feels patronising.

'What are you going to do?' she asks, and Matt looks uneasy. 'For Evan's sake, we need to decide. We can't stay here. We need to get him the help he needs, put him in a place where he can start to rebuild his life, maybe go back to school.'

'He's hardly ready for that.'

'I can see that, *silly*. I'm the one who's at home with him all day, remember? So what I'm asking you is, is it going to be just me and Evan, or are you coming too?'

She's expecting a quick answer, a reassurance that of course he's committed, that she and Evan are his life. Anyone would say that, wouldn't they? But instead there's silence, and she can see Matt forming sentences in his head, trying them out to see which is the best, the least painful fit.

'Listen,' he says.

And then the house phone rings.

She can see the relief on his face. He gets up to find the handset and looks at the caller display.

'It's Dad,' he says, and pushes the button to take the call. 'Hi, Dad, how

are you?’

There’s a long delay as Matt listens. He asks, ‘What did they say?’ and then Jack talks a lot more.

‘I’ll come tomorrow,’ Matt says. ‘Of course I will. No arguments. I’ll set off first thing.’

There are goodbyes, and Matt puts the phone back on its stand. When he sits back down in the armchair, his face is pale.

‘What was that about?’ she asks.

‘Bad news about Mum,’ he says. ‘She’s had some tests done. It’s cancer, cancer of the stomach. They’ve offered her treatment but she’s saying no. I said I’d go up and try and get her to see sense.’

‘I’m sorry, honey,’ Claire says quietly.

‘I’d better go and pack.’

He’s almost out of the room when she calls him back.

‘Do you think Evan might like to go?’

Matt’s face registers his surprise.

‘Really? I’m not sure that’s a good idea.’

‘Why not? I think a change of scene might do him good. He always loved it there, and what is there for him to do here? There’s no school and he’s no friends.’

‘OK. Let’s all go.’

But Claire shakes her head.

‘I think you two should go without me.’

‘Why?’

‘I put too much pressure on him. I know I do. I must be driving him nuts, always watching him, making sure he’s OK. I find it so hard to give him space, and he needs space. I think it would be better to make it a father–son thing. A boys’ road trip.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Yes. I’ll worry about him every minute, and I’ll find it really hard to let him out of my sight. But I think he needs some time without me smothering him.’

Matt shrugs.

‘If he wants to go, of course.’

Claire follows Matt up the stairs, and stops outside Evan's room, listening. There's nothing to hear, not even Evan's breathing, but there's a light shining under the door so she thinks he must still be awake.

She taps gently.

'Evan? Can I come in?'

In this, there's been improvement. In a few moments, the door is opened, though Evan's blocking it with his body, not allowing her in.

She tries not to mind.

'Grandpa's just rung to say Grandma's not very well,' she says. 'Dad's going to drive up in the morning and stay a night or two to see if there's anything he can do. So I was wondering if you wanted to go along for the ride.'

Evan looks at her with his sad eyes, and a flicker of something crosses his face.

Without speaking, he slowly closes the door; but before she moves away, she hears the sound of opening drawers, as Evan chooses clothes to pack for his trip.

TWENTY

11 August

On the journey north, Matt expects no conversation from Evan, but talks as if he does. He suggests Evan puts on the radio, but senses rather than sees a slight shake of his head. Matt would prefer some distraction from what's on his mind – the froth of Radio 2, a commercial station, or even, in deference to Evan, Radio 1 – but Evan seems content to look out of the car window. A few miles on the road, and Matt's finding the empty space a good place to think things over – what he'll say to his mother, the creeping worry that she may not be OK, the way things are between him and Claire, what the impact will be on Evan if they go their separate ways. While Evan was gone, life was simple. There was grief, and not much else. Now the grief for the son he's lost – the normal boy, with normal prospects – is far more complex, and the fact that life will go on means if it's to be more than the drudgery of passing days, roads must be chosen and hard decisions made. Even to be considering what he's contemplating makes Matt feel a heel.

It isn't until the pressure on his bladder starts to be uncomfortable that he realises they're totally unprepared to make this journey. Since his return, Evan has barely left the house, and then only to visit police facilities and the child psychiatrist they lined up for him to begin what they're calling his rehabilitation. Signs appear for services in three miles. Evan is still looking out of the window, hands on his knees, the fingers of his right hand tapping a rhythm which might be boredom but is more likely to be stress. Surreptitiously Matt watches the hand, thinking how it's changed – from the baby fist which used to grip his own fingers, to the toddler hand which held his crossing the road, to the boy's hand which struggled to hold his cards when they played games at Christmas. Now it's a youth's hand, long and oversized and ready to be grown into, at odds with the way Evan is mentally. He seems much younger than he was before, as if he's fallen

under an enchantment reversing the path of maturation, retreating into boyishness as his body shoots up towards manhood.

‘I think we’ll stop for a comfort break, shall we?’ Matt suggests. ‘If you’re hungry, we could get a bite, McDonald’s or something. Only don’t tell your mum.’

As soon as he’s said the words, he sees his lack of tact. For all he knows, Evan was fed nothing but fast food all the time he was gone, which would make it not a treat, but a reminder. A sandwich would be safer, but in the face of Evan’s apparent indifference, it seems it doesn’t matter.

Matt takes the exit slip-road and slows the car. Immediately he’s wondering what to do for the best: park away from the central area where it’s quieter, or just find a space in the thick of things as he would do normally? His instinct is to avoid too many people, but maybe that’s signalling to Evan he thinks there’s an issue. He decides to be bold, and heads for the main car park.

Evan’s fingers are drumming faster on his knee, and Matt doesn’t blame him for being nervous. Since he was last in this kind of environment, his world view has been shattered. Maybe he and Claire should have taken him out more, done more to get him re-integrated, but there’s no instruction manual for their situation, and no one’s offered any practical help. *Let him take his time* is the advice they keep hearing, but how much time should that be? Should they have pushed him harder? By leaving him night and day to his own devices, have they set him up to always be a recluse?

Matt adopts an attitude he hopes Evan will take to be cool and relaxed. He takes his time to find a parking space on a row end, where the left side of the car – Evan’s side – is screened by conifer hedging, and turns off the engine. Evan is looking straight ahead, at rows of vehicles and the people walking amongst them: teenagers and young children with frazzled parents, businessmen and delivery drivers, older people of Jack and Dora’s generation.

‘OK, buddy,’ says Matt. ‘Let’s go.’

Praying Evan will follow his lead, he opens his door. The temptation to look back and see what Evan’s doing is strong, but he resists it. *Act natural*, he’s thinking, *just act natural*. He’s out of the car, but Evan hasn’t moved.

There's a man by himself walking towards them, and Matt senses Evan's eyes on him, but the man's on his phone and passes them without even a glance.

Evan's door opens, and Matt thinks, *Thank Christ*. In a moment Evan is standing beside him – too close beside him, and the closeness provokes in Matt the urge to put an arm around Evan's shoulders.

But that would look odd and they're trying to do normal, where normal for Evan's age would be him trailing behind Matt across the car park, trying to make out they're not related.

'Stick with me, kid,' Matt says with a levity he's not feeling, and they set off for the main building, Evan almost treading on Matt's heels.

People are coming and going. Matt pulls open one of the glass doors and stands aside to let Evan go ahead of him, but Evan hangs back, so Matt goes through first with Evan too close behind.

The atrium is chaotic and hugely noisy, a dissonance of piped music, shouting children and the chatter of hundreds of people.

Evan takes hold of Matt's arm.

'First things first,' says Matt brightly, trying to keep it upbeat. 'I need to find the gents. Let's try over here.'

With Evan's arm linked through his, he feels protective. People will assume Evan has special needs, which of course he does. Taking a long way round to avoid pushing through a crowd, Matt leads his son to the toilets, and inside.

There are men using the urinal.

This is a place where men do intimate things, hidden away from the outside world. Evan tightens his grip on Matt's arm.

'We'll use the stalls, shall we?' Matt says discreetly. 'You go first. I'll guard the door.'

He senses the other men listening, and almost laughs at the irony that he may be taken for some kind of paedophile. Evan clearly likes the idea of a locked door between himself and the strangers, but he's reluctant to be parted from Matt, who touches his back, encouraging him forward. His hand there makes Evan uncomfortable. When he pulls away, it's a stab in Matt's heart.

But Evan goes into the stall, closes the door and bolts it. Matt's bladder is insisting he use the urinal, but Evan might be watching his feet under the stall door, so he handles his discomfort and stays where he is, as he's promised. He waits for Evan to flush, then waits a minute or two longer, but beyond the sound of a zip being done up, there's silence.

The pressure on Matt's bladder is becoming critical.

'Evan, buddy, are you OK?' he asks. A few moments later the bolt is slipped back and Evan appears.

'My turn,' says Matt.

Evan's eyes grow wide, and Matt sees his fear. Evan doesn't want to be alone in here.

'Tell you what,' says Matt. 'You go back in there and lock the door, I'll use the doo-dah over here. One minute max and I'll be back. OK?'

Evan bolts himself back inside the stall, where the flimsy hardboard walls must feel far safer than no walls at all.

'One minute!' calls Matt, unzipping his flies. When he's done, he taps gently at the door.

'I'm back,' he says. 'Let's go.'

Behind the hardboard walls Evan is listening, making his decision on whether it's safe for him to come out. As he's about to take the risk and slide the bolt, two men burst in, talking loudly about last night's football. They sound big and rough, the kind of men who'd easily overpower him, so he sits down on the toilet, puts his arms around himself, hugs himself into the smallest shape he can make and waits, quiet and unseen, until they're gone.

Matt takes out his phone and pretends to be engrossed in it. There's a message from Claire asking how they're getting on, and he replies with *OK* and an emoticon wearing a doubtful face.

The men leave, and several more – far less vocal – enter. Matt's preparing to knock again, but as he raises his hand, the bolt slides back and Evan appears.

He leads Evan out into the food court. The men here are diluted with women and children, and in places there are empty tables where there are no men at all.

They look around at the fast-food franchises: burgers, pizza, fish and chips.

‘What do you fancy?’ asks Matt. He’s feeling inclined towards the fried chicken Claire never lets them eat, but Evan has other ideas. He’s heading the opposite way, indisputably in the direction of McDonald’s.

Claire’s enjoying her first glass of the evening, but the ring of the doorbell eradicates the welcome softening of tension the Pinot Noir brings. Instantly, her mind goes to Matt and Evan, and she hurries into the hall. Through the glass panes in the door, she sees a woman’s outline. Afraid it’s someone from the police, she opens it.

She doesn’t know the woman, and she doesn’t look like police: too young, too colourfully dressed. Even plain-clothes police like Naylor seem to stick to navy-blue and black, occasionally grey. This girl’s in green with flashes of yellow, and her kitten-heeled shoes are yellow to match.

Her smile’s a salesperson’s smile, showing all her white teeth but going nowhere near her eyes. There’s an expensive handbag slung over her shoulder – *Mulberry*? wonders Claire – and some kind of notebook under her arm.

‘Mrs Ferrers?’ she asks.

Claire is still sober enough to be cautious, and she could deny who she is and be believed. The woman on the doorstep has seen photos of Claire from when Evan was taken, and the Claire she’s seeing now looks nothing like those pictures. She looks more like an older relative, and without too much imagination she could be taken for her own mother.

‘Who’s asking?’

‘I am,’ says the young woman, with what she’s hoping is cheeky charm. ‘I’m Annabelle, from the Fletcher magazine group. You’re probably familiar with some of the titles we publish. We mostly do women’s interest, coffee break stuff, lots of celebrities and true stories. It is Claire, isn’t it? Would you mind if I come in?’

In her mind, Claire runs an inventory of the state of the housekeeping. There’s laundry in various conditions in the kitchen and utility – waiting for washing, waiting for drying, waiting for ironing, waiting to be put away – and even though it would be dinner-time in a normally functioning

household, she's yet to tackle the dishes left over from breakfast. The carpets need vacuuming, the bathrooms need cleaning and the kitchen floor needs a mop. Without thinking about it in any detail, there's enough to keep her going an entire weekend.

She takes up a position which blocks the door, stopping Annabelle from seeing into the hallway.

'What is it you want?' she asks.

'Just a little chat, really,' says Annabelle. She lays her head on one side, another charming gesture which might work on some men. 'We think our readers would be really interested in your story, in the feel-good aspects of it. You know, your son back home with you, how you feel about that, how it is to be a family again.'

Entirely of their own accord, Claire's eyebrows lift.

'Are you serious?' she asks.

Annabelle misses the incredulity in her tone.

'Readers would love to hear how it's been,' she says. 'There'd be a fee of some kind, of course.'

Claire reflects on how it's been: her silent son, her absent husband, the sense of everything still as irreparably broken as it ever was.

She produces her own version of Annabelle's insincere smile.

'I don't mean to be rude,' she says, 'but why don't you just fuck off?'

Late afternoon, and the motorways have been left far behind. They're passing through open country glorious with summer, where sheep are grazing amongst the upland bracken, and rivers sparkle in valleys where wildflowers colour their banks.

This tranquil beauty is balm for the soul, and Matt realises he's missed it. Evan seems to be enjoying the scenery. Maybe he's missed it, too.

At the turn for Ainsclough Top, the stream where Evan used to fish runs under a bridge. Matt slows the car, allowing Evan a view of the clear water where wild cresses flourish.

'I expect you could find time to come down here with your net while we're here, see what you can catch.'

Immediately Matt regrets saying it, thinking Evan's far too old now for such childish things. Evan's solemn face doesn't move, but as they turn up

the track towards the farm, he looks back over his shoulder, and his eyes, it seems to Matt, are on the stream.

Jack's waiting, smiling, at the door. As they get out of the car, Matt looks for signs of worry in his face, but there's nothing to see. Evan walks straight up to his grandpa, gives him the briefest of hugs and goes inside the house.

'How's Mum?' asks Matt, and Jack shrugs.

'She's all right,' he says. 'At least she says she is. Stubborn as ever. Let's talk about it later. We don't want to upset the boy.'

In the living room, Dora's sitting on the sofa, a book of word-search puzzles on her lap. To her obvious pleasure, Evan is sitting beside her, holding her hand.

Matt crosses to her and kisses her cheek. Her face is undeniably thinner, and the bones at the base of her throat are prominent.

'How are you doing, you old attention-seeker?' he asks. 'You look pretty well to me.'

'I'm all right,' she says. 'A bit tired. Just feeling my age, aren't I, love?' She squeezes Evan's hand. 'I'm hoping you might help me a bit with these puzzles, and I'm sorry to say your grandpa's threatening to cook tea.'

The ghost of a smile touches Evan's eyes and the corners of his mouth.

'I shall make a good job of it, too,' says Jack, mock-indignantly. 'Sausages, chips and beans, and maybe an egg if you're lucky. And I'm commandeering your dad to peel potatoes. Dora, my love, you'll be ready for a cup of tea, and Evan, you'll be wanting something cold. But you stay where you are and look after your grandma. I'll get your dad to bring it through.'

Outside the open kitchen window, the perfume of the honeysuckle which clings to the old stone wall mingles with the smell of straw from the barn, and the sharp, familiar stink of sheep. The window looks on to the rose garden, where Dora planted the first bushes just after Matt was born. Over the years, she's nurtured it to an immaculately cared-for Eden, and Matt's troubled to see some of the blooms have browning petals, while others are dead and dried. On the path, the secateurs lying in a trug are spotted with the beginnings of rust.

Matt pops the cap off a bottle of Sam Smith's.

'You want one?'

He takes another from the fridge, and hands it to his father. A red kite is wheeling over Blackmire Ridge, in a sky that's still bright as midday.

'So,' says Matt. 'Tell me.'

Jack takes a drink of his beer.

'It's been a bad week,' he says. 'Here, start on these potatoes. I blame myself for letting it get this far.'

Matt hunts for a peeler in the drawer, which is a confusion of his mother's lifetime collection of cooking implements: knives and graters, wooden spoons, spatulas and whisks.

'What do you mean, "this far"? What's the story?'

'The signs were there, the lack of appetite, the weight loss. But we were wrapped up in other things, weren't we? We were worrying about Evan.' As Jack's talking, he's laying sausages in a pan, big, fat Cumbrian sausages from the village butcher. He turns on a hotplate on the old stove and puts the frying pan on the heat. 'Then she was sick, and said it was nothing. She was sick again, and I caught her taking pills for the pain in her stomach. Turns out it's been going on a while.'

'How long is a while?'

'A year. Maybe longer.'

Matt lays the peeler on the table. He looks distressed.

'Bloody hell, Dad. A year? Why didn't she say?'

'She thought we all had enough on our plates. Which of course we did, but now it looks like we've got two plates instead of one. We got the scan results yesterday. That's why I rang you. I didn't want to burden you until we were sure.'

'What's the prognosis?'

Jack stares out of the window. He lowers his chin to his chest.

'Don't ask me that, son,' he says. 'Let's take it one day at a time.'

Dora, Matt notices, eats very little – a few slices of sausage, a spoonful of baked beans, a piece of dry toast Jack has made her instead of chips.

Evan has cleared his plate, and instead of disappearing, has stayed to watch a DVD Jack has found.

‘*Only Fools and Horses?*’ asks Matt. ‘Bit retro, isn’t it?’

‘There’s nothing wrong with retro,’ says Jack. ‘Some things stand the test of time.’

The comedy takes Matt back to boyhood, to the age where Evan is now. Evan’s holding Dora’s hand, and as he watches the screen, he begins to smile, a cautious, hesitant smile, as if he’s trying on something that used to be a comfortable fit, as if he’s rediscovered something precious but isn’t sure it’s meant for him. The gags come thick and fast, and Matt finds himself smiling too. Jack loads up another episode, a Christmas special. Matt has seen it several times and remembers it well, but it still entertains.

And at the high spot, in the famous moment when Del Boy, fancying his chances with a couple of girls, loses his cool falling through a gap in the bar, a miracle occurs.

Evan laughs.

‘Your grandma thought you should have your dad’s old room,’ says Jack, following Evan up the creaking stairs. ‘There’s a better view from there. Your dad’s seen it often enough, so she’s put him in the guest room.’ Upstairs the house shows its considerable age, low ceilings and bowed walls, black beams and latched doors. ‘You’re handy for the bathroom there, too. There’s plenty of hot water if you want a shower, but that’s it for the mod cons, I’m afraid. No telly up here. You know me and your grandma. We like to live in the Stone Age.’

Evan pushes open the door at the end of the landing. It’s a small room with a window looking out across the home field and the grazing sheep. In an apple tree whose branches almost touch the windowpanes, a blackbird is singing evensong, melodious and clear.

A single bed made with line-dried linen is pushed against the wall, a hand-knitted patchwork blanket in the crazily bright colours Dora loves folded at its foot. On the bedside table there’s a lamp and a stack of books: a tattered *Beano* annual, a collection of Spike Milligan’s poems, Barry Hines’s *A Kestrel for a Knave*, an outdated encyclopaedia of amazing facts, a new magazine of word-search puzzles with a pen. On the dressing table are three white roses in a vase.

Jack points to the roses.

‘I told your grandma young men don’t appreciate flowers, but she goes her own way, as you well know. Unpack your things if you like, make yourself at home. The top drawer of that chest is empty. The rest of it’s full of your dad’s stuff which I reckon should have gone in the bin years ago, but that’s your grandma again. So. I’ll leave you to it. Sweet dreams, son.’

In the distant past, he would have kissed Evan goodnight. Under normal circumstances, Evan would be beyond that now, well into those early teenage years of self-conscious separation. But Evan looks small, slightly bewildered and alone, and the urge to put an arm round him is strong.

Jack resists. As he reaches the top of the stairs, he hears the knock of wood on wood as Evan props a chair against the door, barricading himself in and sealing out the world.

Dora has gone to bed. Jack goes to the sideboard and takes a bottle of Glenfiddich and two of the best lead crystal glasses from the cupboard.

He holds up the bottle to Matt, who nods his head.

‘What’s this?’ he says. ‘Christmas come early?’

‘I’ve fallen out with Christmas.’ Jack pours a generous measure into each glass. ‘It never came last year, and it looks like it might not this year either. Cheers.’

They clink glasses, and Jack sinks into an armchair.

‘What do you think to Evan?’ asks Matt, and Jack shakes his head.

‘I don’t know, son, I really don’t know. Something inside him’s switched off.’

‘Hardly surprising, is it?’ There’s repressed rage in Matt’s voice. ‘What’s happened to him, what he’s been through . . . I have to stop myself thinking about it. If I think about it, it makes me so angry I could kill someone.’

Jack swills the whisky in his glass. ‘Maybe he feels the same.’

‘I worry that his life is slipping by. He’s missed so much already – school, of course, and friendships. All those things we wanted for him, gone. How will he ever catch up? Sometimes I think his life is ruined forever. Is he destined just to stay in that dark place where he is now? Will he ever come back from there? What happens if he doesn’t?’

‘Is he still seeing that counsellor?’

Matt sighs. They had kept all their appointments, ushering Evan into the waiting room of a converted Victorian gentleman's residence, sitting on the hard chairs, flicking through back copies of dog-eared magazines while a mahogany-cased clock ticked in the hallway. The place was drab, dark, unappealing, but Evan submitted quietly, as he seems to submit to pretty much everything, these days. When she called him through to her office, Dr Mellor was soft-spoken and kind, the sort of woman you'd want for a favourite aunt, unsexy, unthreatening, the epitome of a human being you'd trust.

Matt had imagined with some unease the kind of things Evan and Dr Mellor might discuss, mentally squirming at the possible involvement of anatomically correct dolls and explicit diagrams. A part of him had been irrationally jealous, thinking his son was confiding in a stranger what he wouldn't say to him, even though, God knew, the last thing on earth he wanted to hear was what Evan had to say. To know the facts would be unbearable; only to imagine them allowed a level of denial, an element of soft-focus which kept the pain in check. Certain knowledge of his son's suffering would mean those responsible would have to die. Which wasn't a problem, necessarily. If Matt spent the rest of his life in jail, honour would be satisfied, and it would be appropriate payback for his not having protected Evan in the first place.

But there had been no discussions, explicit or otherwise.

'They canned it after three sessions,' he says to Jack. 'He wouldn't speak to her any more than he'll talk to us.'

After the last session, while Claire led a sad, silent Evan out to the car, Matt had taken the opportunity to talk to Dr Mellor and express his most pressing concerns.

'He seems younger than when he left us,' he said. 'Like some kind of Peter Pan.'

Dr Mellor had nodded wisely, as if what Matt was saying made sense to her. 'That's hardly surprising. Subconsciously, he's retreated into childhood, to a time where he felt safe.'

'So what can we do about it?'

Dr Mellor shook her head. 'At the moment, your only option is to wait.'

How long the wait would be – weeks, months or years – she wasn't prepared to guess. The day before Evan's next scheduled appointment, she rang and said she thought it better to put the counselling on hold, postpone it until Evan was further down the road to recovery.

'Claire was pretty pissed off, considering the shrink was supposed to *be* the road to recovery,' says Matt. 'She thinks they've abandoned us.'

'And what do you think?'

'I think he's better left alone for a while, to let him try and get his head in some sort of order.'

'So he still hasn't given a statement?'

'Not a chance. What gets me is, if the police had got anyone in their sights, or were close to arresting anybody or even had the slightest idea where to look, they'd have him down there every day, asking him questions. My worry is, the longer he stays silent, the harder it'll be to break the habit.' He takes a drink of the warming whisky. 'I don't know, Dad. I just want our old Evan. Do you ever wish you could turn the clock back?'

'Just lately, all the time,' says Jack. 'But if wishes were horses . . .'

'. . . Beggars would ride. It's a stupid saying.'

'And how's Claire?'

'As you saw her. Drinking too much, but that's rich, coming from me.'

'You want another?'

'Best not. I don't want a thick head in the morning.'

'Have a small one with me,' says Jack, getting up to fetch the bottle. 'You wouldn't want to leave your old dad drinking alone.'

TWENTY-ONE

13 August

It's been a busy week. On Saturday, glad of a lie-in, Naylor stays in bed till after eleven, until her usually placid ginger cat decides it's waited too long to be fed and wakes her by jumping on the bed. She's hungry too and would love a proper breakfast. As usual, though, there's very little in the fridge.

After a long, hot shower, she puts on jeans and a T-shirt, flip-flops and sunglasses, and heads out. At Waitrose, the car park's busy, and she has a long walk to the store. Passing one of the trolley return stations, she catches sight of a familiar face, unloading bags into the back of a car.

He's looking good in casual clothes. Sensing he's being watched, he looks across and smiles, and she's smiling back, until she sees there's someone else in the picture: a pretty blonde climbing into the front seat of Dallabrida's white Audi.

He gives her a wave, and Naylor does the same. As she sees him drive away, there's something in her heart which might be disappointment.

Evan is outside in the barn, sitting high up on the straw bales, from where the view's down the farm track to the stream. He likes it there: the clean, country smell of it, the prickle of the dry corn stalks on the back of his legs, the tickle of the breeze blowing through the door. In the garden, he can see his dad dead-heading roses, cutting clumsily at the bushes, not taking dainty care like Grandma. Grandma's sitting in a director's chair keeping an eye on Dad, but she's not saying anything, which Evan thinks must be hard. Though he can't see it, he can hear a bird calling overhead, a harsh cry Grandpa's told him is a bird of prey, a red kite. And having a sudden wish to see it, Evan climbs down from his eyrie, and wanders out from the barn's shadows, into the sunshine on the home field.

'You've got sheep-muck on your shoes,' says Jack, as Evan enters the kitchen a while later. 'Don't be traipsing it through the house. Take them off

on the mat, or your grandma'll be having a fit and blaming me. Haven't you brought your wellies?'

Evan looks at him, but doesn't speak.

'I don't see how you can be on the farm without proper footwear,' says Jack. 'Your dad's having a run to the shops in a while for a few bits and bobs. Shall we ask him to pop into Hooper's and see what they've got that might fit you?'

Evan shrugs, but his expression is on the pleased side of neutral.

'What size do you think you are?' Jack makes a performance of studying Evan's feet. 'An eight or nine, I'd say. We'll ask him to get nines, then you've something to grow into. Now go and use the outside tap, and get those shoes cleaned up.'

Dora appears to be dozing, but she's not asleep, she's listening to the bees amongst the roses. She knows someone's approaching from the rattle of a cup on its saucer and the light chink of a teaspoon on china.

Matt touches her shoulder very lightly, and she opens her eyes.

'Mum? I brought you a cup of tea.'

She smiles.

'That's very nice, dear. Come and sit down.'

Matt puts the tea down on the cast-iron table, and fetches another canvas chair from the shed where Dora keeps her gardening clutter, rakes, hoes, trowels and shears.

As he sits he says, 'I should have brought you a biscuit. I bought Jaffa Cakes. Evan likes those.'

'Me too,' says Dora, 'but I don't want one just now.'

'How are you feeling?' Matt's attention, like Dora's, seems focused on a stem of red roses, where the bees are crawling in the innermost petals.

'I'm all right,' she says.

'Dad says they've put you on painkillers.'

'They're a double-edged sword. They do a good job, but they make me so sleepy. And I don't want to be sleeping. Not the way things are.'

Matt takes a deep breath before he speaks.

'Why won't you have the op, Mum? You're breaking Dad's heart. And mine.'

The tears he's wanted to avoid are suddenly there, and he wipes his eyes with the back of his hand.

'Oh, sweetheart. Please don't.'

'How can I not?' he asks. 'You wouldn't be very pleased if I didn't give a damn.'

'I suppose I wouldn't.'

'So why? If there's a good chance . . . You know.'

'If there's a good chance of what? The truth is I'm just an old coward, and I can't bear the thought of all that cutting and stitching and all that uncomfortableness, and then they want me to take all those drugs. And there's no guarantee any of it will work. Shall I tell you a little story? You won't remember Josie Makepeace, but I've known her for years. Stalwart of the WI, involved in everything, that was Josie. Heart and soul of any party. Well, last year she was diagnosed with something nasty. I don't know where it was exactly – ovaries maybe, somewhere in the down-below. You wouldn't have known it to look at her. She didn't look ill. Only in her fifties, and she looked the picture of health. But she signed up for all the treatment, the surgery, the chemo, radiotherapy, everything they'd got. Within a fortnight, she looked a different woman, so ill and grey. And you know what? After her second lot of chemo, she had a stroke. Three days in a coma and she was gone, like that! So if a young woman like her couldn't stand the treatment, what chance for an old bird like me? I've thought about it long and hard – and it's been harder than you could ever imagine – and I've decided I would far, far rather let nature take its course, and spend what time I've got here, with your father and you and everyone, than in some hospital being sick and losing my hair. The choice is between quality of life and quantity, and I think I'd prefer quality. Can you understand?' She reaches out and takes his hand, squeezing it hard. 'You are so, so precious to me, Matty. I haven't said it enough. We're a bit stick-in-the-mud about our emotions, aren't we? I've loved you in the fiercest way since the moment you were born. But none of us live forever. I hope I shall see Christmas, in fact I'm determined I shall. Last year was so miserable for everyone, and I want us all to have a happy Christmas this year. And I shall rest easier, if I see Evan on the road to recovery. I think he seems a little

better.'

'Do you?'

'A little. Maybe he's caught the sun. He looked so pale when we first saw him.'

'He hates to go outdoors at home. He seems to like it well enough here, though.'

'No people. No threats.'

'I suppose so. I think he had a settled night, no nightmares. I didn't hear him, anyway, but then I slept like a log. Probably the influence of Dad's Glenfiddich.'

'He'd be glad to have someone to share it. I'm not much for drinking, at the moment. You know, Evan could stay with us for a few days if you like, see how he gets on. It might take the pressure off you and Claire.'

'What pressure?'

Dora pats her son's hand.

'I'm not a fool, Matty. I see what I see. For Evan's sake, you should try and work things out. You've been through a lot together, and Evan needs you both.'

Matt sighs. A honey bee takes off from one red bloom and migrates to another, pure white.

'I'm afraid that ship may already have sailed.'

'You might be surprised. Things are different now he's home.'

'Not as different as they should be.'

'So what about Evan? Do you think he might want to stay?'

'I don't know. I'll ask him.'

'You'd better ask Claire first, see how she feels about it.'

'I'm sure she'll say it's whatever Evan wants.'

'I think so too. And your father would be over the moon.'

TWENTY-TWO

14 August

Jack's still keeping up old habits, up and about before dawn, even though he's barely slept for worrying about Dora. She seems to be sleeping too well, dozing at every opportunity, falling into deep slumber as soon as she lies down at night, dispensing with her lifetime's habit of reading a chapter of her library book. The books are piled up now on the ottoman at the end of the bed. They're due for return in a couple of days, and Dora hasn't read a single one. Jack tells himself it's the drugs that are making her sleep so much, and there's no doubt the opiates do induce drowsiness. In optimistic moments, he believes she's sleeping herself a cure, shutting down non-essential functions so her body can focus on fighting the enemy within. In pessimistic moods – which he tries to keep at bay – he can't help feeling that her body's winding down, that his Dora is being pushed aside and undermined by the invading armies of her disease.

He's made tea, but there's no newspaper to go with it. There have been no papers in the house since his family made the headlines. He's seen first-hand the price people pay to give them a story, and how a few words of newsprint don't tell even the beginning of the narrative as it actually is. Misery, despair, grief, hope. Column inches touch none of those things, and they're the only things which count.

As he's drinking his first cup and thinking about going outside, he hears the latch on the kitchen door. He turns round from his view down the valley – all mist and promise for a perfect summer's day – and sees Evan, dressed in his jeans and a hoody, his hair dishevelled from sleep.

Jack smiles.

'Now then, youngster. You're up early! Are you having a cup of tea?'

Evan shakes his head. He wanders to the fridge, finds a carton of orange juice and fills a glass. He drinks half, and goes to stand by his grandfather's chair, so his view of the valley is the same as Jack's. With Evan so close,

Jack's somehow afraid to startle him, as if the boy's a nervous, wild thing which will take flight at the slightest movement.

'Since you're up, you can come and help me,' he says. 'We'll go and let the poultry out, and have a look in on the sheep. What do you say? But you'll have to put your wellies on. Your grandmother'll have a fit if you bring more muck in on your shoes.'

Outside, in the apricot light, Jack leads the way across the yard. Millie's lying outside her kennel, still half-asleep, but when Jack unfastens her from her chain, she's all wagging tail and excitement, running at Jack, and then, to his obvious pleasure, to Evan, who strokes her head. In the barn, Jack lifts the lid of a corn-bin, and shovels out a couple of scoops into an empty sack as Millie darts back and forth along the barn's back wall sniffing for rats.

Jack hands the sack to Evan, and they head for the home field, Millie running ahead as excited as if she's never done this before, bounding over the wall while Jack unfastens the gate and leads Evan across the grass to the rickety shed where he keeps the chickens. Undoing the latch, he fastens back the door, and the birds come tumbling out, squawking and complaining.

Jack points to an empty feeder.

'Corn in there,' he says, and Evan tips it in, smiling as the chickens squabble to get to it. 'You'd think they hadn't been fed for a week. Your next job is to fetch them some water with that bucket by the sheep trough. That's very important for them in this hot weather. Thirsty birds give no eggs. When that's done, we'll have a look how many they've laid. You see what's in the coop, and then we'll check the field. Every day's an Easter egg hunt with these girls, but we'd better find a few, or there'll be nothing much for breakfast.'

When they go back inside, Matt is in the kitchen, making a fresh pot of tea.

'Here we are,' says Jack. 'Eight of the finest. Show your dad, Evan.' Evan reaches into the front pocket of his hoody and one at a time, brings out the eggs they have found, ivory white and buff brown. 'He's got a nose for them. I only found three yesterday. If that's fresh tea, I'll have a cup,

and I'll take one up to your mother. She should be awake by now.'

Evan sits down at the table and begins to play with the eggs, lining them up by size, rolling them as if to understand their physics.

'How shall we cook them?' asks Jack. 'The world's our oyster. Scrambled, boiled, poached or fried?' He's on his way to the fridge to get milk for the tea, and without thinking, he reaches out and ruffles Evan's hair.

But Evan doesn't seem to mind.

Dora is still sleeping. Jack places a flowered cup with a single digestive biscuit in its saucer on the bedside table, and opens the curtains. The room floods with the brilliance of summer light, and Dora stirs. Jack crosses to the bed and bends down to kiss her forehead.

'Rise and shine, sleeping beauty.'

Dora opens her eyes, but he doesn't see the smile he usually gets when she wakes. Instead, she's frowning, and under the blankets he can see her hand move to her stomach.

'Are you all right, my darling?'

'I've got a bit of a pain,' she says. 'Do you think you could pass my pills?'

Awkwardly, she sits up, leaning forward so Jack can put an extra pillow at her back. The blister-pack of medication is on the dressing table, and he presses out two, passing them to Dora with a glass of water.

'It's a beautiful day,' he says. 'Evan and I have been collecting eggs.'

'That's nice,' she says, and swallows the tablets. 'Any luck?'

'We found eight. So it's eggs for breakfast. Scrambled or boiled?'

Dora smiles.

'I think I'll stick to toast,' she says. 'How did he seem?'

'He seems to be relaxing, but I didn't get a peep out of him. Maybe he needs a little nudge.'

'Oh, Jack, don't be impatient. He'll come round when he's ready.'

'Maybe. Shall I leave you to get dressed?'

'You can leave me to drink my tea, and I'll get up, by and by. But I feel like being lazy this morning. I might read for a little while.'

'If you're tired, my love, just stay where you are. Would you like

marmalade on your toast?’

‘A dab of honey would be lovely. And Jack, don’t you be thinking about putting any pressure on that boy.’

‘Don’t worry,’ says Jack. ‘I won’t.’

TWENTY-THREE

15 August

On the journey south, Matt is thoughtful. Claire has agreed Evan should stay with Jack and Dora a few more days, but without him, the vacancy in the passenger seat feels pronounced, and there's a part of Matt which aches with the loss of his son almost as if he were still missing, which in truth he is. It's been weeks, and he feels all his attempts to reconnect with Evan have been useless. He isn't so naive as to expect Evan ever again to be the sunny, happy boy who was taken away, but he's dared to hope some of the old Evan might re-emerge, that there might be flashes of him, moments, minutes, hours of the son he lost.

But there's been little evidence of it so far, and Matt's ashamed to admit even to himself that leaving Evan on the farm will be a few days of respite he didn't even realise he needed.

He doesn't rush to get home. He thinks he knows what he'll find, and the prospect's not one he relishes. He picks up dinner for himself from the Chinese takeaway three streets away: Singapore noodles, chilli beef, salt and pepper chicken wings. He doesn't buy anything for Claire. Left to her own devices, she will have used the summer's evening as an excuse to open the wine extra early: a glass in the garden in the sunshine, she'll tell herself, and before very long the glass will have been a bottle, and she'll be pretty much out cold.

As he pulls up in the driveway, the day is finally drawing to its close in a dusk where the city-bound traffic is no more than a background hum. After the farm, the air smells distinctly of suburbia: fresh cut grass on next door's lawn, charring meat on a barbecue, warm tarmac. He turns off the engine, and for a few moments stays where he is, looking at the house which is supposed to be his home. He used to love this house, was proud of it, felt glad to be here at the end of the day. Now he doesn't feel he belongs here, and he's briefly overwhelmed at the unfairness of how their lives have

turned out, of how much has been taken from them by the stealing of Evan.

Yet what choice does he have but to go inside to his miserable wife? How can he blame her for what she feels? But the weight of her grief drags him down. He's tried to be strong for them both, but the burden is too heavy alone and she can't or won't help him carry it. In spite of himself, he resents that.

He climbs slowly from the car. Putting his key in the lock, he turns it and opens the door.

It's not what he's expecting. The house smells different, like the old, pre-loss days, and he tries to identify what's fighting with the garlic and frying oil coming from his bag of takeaway. There's floor cleaner, and Windolene, and the woollen smell of carpets after vacuuming. And on top of that there's cooking, something with chicken and mushrooms.

From recent habit, he looks for Claire first in the lounge, thinking she'll be lying on the sofa, the unwatched TV showing *Emmerdale* or *Corrie*. But the TV's silent, and the sofa has the plumped-cushion look of not even having been sat on. On the windowsill, there's a vase of fresh flowers.

Fresh flowers?

'Hello!' He finds her in the kitchen, stirring a pan on the hob and smiling. Things have been put away – the sink is empty of unwashed plates and mugs – and the worktops have been wiped down. A window is open on to the back garden, letting in the scents of the summer evening. What's missing is a wine bottle, and an always-full glass.

In Claire's tired eyes there's a hint of sparkle, a trace of the woman he married.

He puts his Chinese food on the counter.

'Hey.' He gestures at the cleaned-up kitchen. 'What's going on?'

'Elves,' she says. 'They came while I was sleeping.'

'Looks good. What are you making?'

'Some super-speedy Jamie Oliver thing. Speedy when he does it, anyway. But it looks like you brought your own.'

'I'd rather have home cooking.' Through his shirt, he squeezes a handful of the belly fat this unwanted Just Eat, chips-with-everything new life has forced on him.

She seems embarrassed, a little self-conscious.

‘You can ask me if you want.’

‘Ask you what?’

She gives him a look.

‘OK, I’ll ask. Where’s the wine?’

‘I thought I’d have a night off. Actually it’s my third night off. Since you and Evan went.’

He’s surprised. There hasn’t been a night Claire hasn’t been drinking since – he can’t remember when.

‘How come?’ He crosses to the stove, lifts the lid on a pan. ‘Couscous? You’re scaring me.’

‘I’ve had an epiphany,’ she says. ‘And I’m hungry. Let’s eat and I’ll tell you.’

She reaches into drawers and cupboards for plates and cutlery, actions that used to be routine but it hasn’t been this way for a long, long time. Pushed to say when they last ate together properly, Claire couldn’t begin to guess. Christmas, maybe, although even then she can’t remember that she ate much; most of her calories were in a glass. She spoons couscous and chicken on to two plates, and adds generous portions of green beans.

Matt’s peering over her shoulder, crunching on a prawn cracker.

‘Are those actual vegetables?’ he asks. ‘Fresh vegetables?’

‘Yes, they are. You’d better eat them up, or there’ll be no pudding.’

‘Is there pudding?’

‘Chocolate tart.’

‘You’ve been baking?’

‘I haven’t gone that far. Courtesy of Mr Sainsbury. Shall we eat at the table?’

Matt raises his eyebrows. These days, it’s all eating on knees, TV on. He’s been thinking of football or a Sky box set, but he’s intrigued to know what’s going on in Claire’s mind.

The food is good. Claire hasn’t lost her touch.

‘Very nice,’ he says.

‘Thank Jamie Oliver.’

He puts down his fork and touches her hand.

‘I’m not thanking him. I’m thanking you.’

Claire puts down her own fork.

‘Can I tell you something terrible?’ she says. ‘About me?’

He looks into her face and sees all the changes there, the new lines, the dark circles under her eyes, the dryness of her lips, the hollows where there was a healthy plumpness. The prettiness he fell in love with is all but gone, and his wife appears decades older than she did before Evan’s abduction. Whatever happens between them now, whether this marriage sinks or swims, in this moment he feels her pain and aches for her, for them both.

‘What could be terrible about you?’ he asks.

‘I need to tell you something, even though you might hate me for it.’

‘I promise I won’t hate you.’

‘Don’t make promises you can’t keep.’

‘Try me.’

He picks up his fork and spears a piece of chicken, chewing as she gathers her thoughts.

‘When Evan was taken, I thought I’d die of misery.’ She’s not looking at him any more but out of the window on to the summer garden, as if she can see there the past she’s remembering. ‘Every day was torture. The only reason I didn’t kill myself was the faint hope that he’d come back, even though I’d begun to accept he wouldn’t, towards the end. I didn’t have any hope left and then, miraculously, there he was. Our boy. My son, back from the presumed dead.’

Matt nods.

‘It was a massive shock,’ he says.

‘A good shock,’ she says. ‘The very best you could hope for, in the beginning. And I wasn’t stupid enough to think things would ever be like they were. I never expected that. Even though I hate to think about it, he must have suffered. He must have suffered terribly.’ Her eyes are wet with tears. ‘I know the kind of thing that must have gone on, and that makes me so very, very angry, I want to find those men and kill them, kill them in the most horrible way possible, with knives and burning and anything else I can think of. I want them to suffer the way they made him suffer. That’s one reason for the wine. It makes me sleep, and takes the edge off all that

anger.'

Matt's appetite is suddenly gone. He recognises the rage she feels; as his car eats up the miles of his daily drive, he's regularly planned murderous, bloody assaults on his son's captors, slow deaths and vengeful tortures.

'That's understandable,' he says. 'No one would blame you for that. We can plot revenge together, pool our ideas.'

She manages a teary smile.

'Maybe. But that's not why you'll hate me.' She draws a deep breath. 'When Evan was first home, I was patient. I tried to understand the silence, the bolted door, and I tried to cope with the rejection, but all the while a voice was nagging in me, a resentful voice asking why he wouldn't trust me. Why he wouldn't trust us. We're his mum and dad, and he doesn't trust us. And you can say all those things about how damaged he is and I know it isn't logical or even beginning to be fair, but there came a day – I couldn't say when, exactly – when I needed some acknowledgement, some gesture of affection, just a hug or kiss to say, *I know you're there, Mum*. But that's never come. He seems so lost, so shut down, that I doubt that he's ever coming back. And so I started thinking I don't have a son any more. He's alive but that's all he is. He's like some kind of hungry ghost, a shell of what he was, and he'll never have any affection for us ever again, because that's what those men have taken. We have Evan's body, but they've eaten his soul, and he's never coming back. And so I thought – and this is the really bad part – I thought if we didn't have Evan, if Evan is going to be a ghost for the rest of his life, haunting us from up there in his room, I thought I don't have a son any more and I want a son, so I thought we should start trying for a baby. A replacement for the son we didn't get back.'

It's not what Matt's expecting. Despite his protestations of an open mind, he's shocked.

'A baby? Really? Sweetheart, I don't think . . .'

She holds up a hand to stop him.

'I don't think that now. I thought it for a couple of weeks. Then I thought with the way you and I have been . . . I mean, it's a long time since you and I thought about each other in that way, and I'm not exactly an

enticing prospect, am I? And I realised how shallow I was being and how crazy it was to even think about giving up on Evan, because that's what I was thinking about doing, just abandoning him to his twilight world and saying, well, that son didn't work out too well, so I'll give it another go. I was putting my grief ahead of his well-being. I was being needy, when my needs pale into insignificance, into non-existence when you think about his needs. So I thought again, and I thought I wasn't being much of a mother, was I, being pissed by four every afternoon and spark out on the sofa by seven. What boy could resist spending time with a mother like that? So in the spirit of being the change you want to see and in the interests of my liver, I've turned over a new leaf. Back to the old days of domestic efficiency and home comforts.'

Matt smiles.

'I'm pleased to hear it.'

'I just think it's time we pointed the Ferrers family ship back in the direction of normal. You and me, at least. Especially me. Even if Evan can't join us for the time being, I want there to be a home for him to come back to when he's ready. There was a moment when I was watching *EastEnders* and there was a punch-up, all the usual shouting and violence, and it was like I could see myself from above, lying on the sofa, half-drunk in my don't-care clothes with my don't-care hair, just a mess. And I thought, the old me would never have done this, drinking from tea-time, watching soaps until I fell into a coma. The old me was busy and sociable and involved, and I thought how could I expect to find the old Evan when he'd come home to new me all raddled and slovenly and sprawled on the sofa? What right did I have to expect him to recover if I haven't put a foot on that road myself? I want to set an example. None of us can be the same, I know that, but I want to be someone he wants to spend time with, someone who looks strong and together and capable. Someone who looks and acts like the mum he remembers, not this sad thing I am now.'

He feels the tightness in his throat which presages tears, a feeling with which he's become far too familiar. Leaning forward, he puts his arm round Claire's shoulder, where he finds more bones than there used to be. While he's been growing portly on his on-the-road diet, she's been getting skinny

on Chablis and Pinot Noir.

She leans into him in a way she hasn't since he doesn't know when, and hides her face in his shirt, in his end-of-the-day smell of stale aftershave and sweat.

'I can't say I'm not struggling,' she says. 'I'd kill for a glass of white.'

'Three days,' he says. 'I'm proud of you.'

'I made myself a chart,' she says. 'Look.' Standing up, she opens a cupboard door, where there's a ragged piece of paper stuck up with Sellotape, two columns with the days of the week and next to two of them, a tick. 'I'll get my third tick at bedtime.'

'That's my girl,' he says.

'It's hard. But every time I think about heading for the fridge, I think how much harder it's been for Evan. Infinitely, immeasurably harder. I should have stopped the minute he came home. I don't know why I didn't.'

'Because you weren't ready,' says Matt. 'But if you're ready now, I'm really, really pleased.'

He squeezes her shoulder and gives her a peck on the cheek. They continue to eat, and Matt feels the beginning of a lightness in his heart he hasn't felt in too long.

'He seemed better at the farm,' he says. 'Not happy, but more relaxed. Did you mind me leaving him there?'

'I'm worried about him, but it's not about me. Not if it's better for him. Why do you think he's more relaxed there?'

Matt shrugs.

'The wide open spaces, maybe. He can see there's no one coming to get him. I get the impression he daren't go outside here, and who can blame him? In the middle of a field, there's no threat.'

'We should have thought of that.'

'Maybe. But if he won't talk to us, there's no knowing what he's thinking. Don't be so hard on yourself. There's no textbook or manual for this situation. We're all just groping in the dark.'

'I'll come with you to fetch him back,' says Claire. 'Or maybe I could pick him up.'

When their plates are empty, Matt stands to carry them to the sink. He

has his back to her when Claire says, ‘Matt.’

He senses by the hesitation in her voice, by the softness of her tone – as if she’s reached out for his hand, though it’s been a long time since she’s done that – that something’s coming, something he realises in that moment he’s been expecting. He wants to look at her, to judge from her expression what she’s thinking, but he’s afraid his own face might give something away. Better keep it light, non-committal.

‘That’s me.’

‘There’s something else I want to say. I feel I’ve already lost my son, for the time being at least, and I’d be devastated if I lost you, too. I’m not losing you, am I?’

He turns on the hot tap, and doesn’t look round as he rinses the plates, so she doesn’t see the slight blush colouring his cheeks. He thinks of Dora’s words, her insistence that he and Claire should work things out. When he turns to her, he’s smiling.

‘Of course not. Why would you think that? We’re a team, you and me, always have been.’

She’s watching him earnestly, and her eyes are travelling over his face, reading his features for clues, figuring out if he’s telling the truth.

He keeps his eyes steady and maintains the smile, then shuts it down in case it’s gone on too long, not sure he’s prepared for the scrutiny of this newly sober Claire.

‘What do you think,’ he says, ‘that after all this, I’d give up on us? You know me better than that, don’t you? Didn’t you mention pudding? I’m ready for something sweet. How about cutting us a piece of that chocolate tart?’

TWENTY-FOUR

16 August

‘Look what I’ve got.’

Evan’s on the sofa next to Dora, helping her with word-search puzzles. He’s sitting very close but not quite touching her, his knees drawn up and wrapped round with his arms as he used to do when a very small boy. Dora is holding back, letting Evan do most of the work. When he finds a word, she hands him the pen to draw a line through it, and when he’s drawn his line, he hands the pen back.

Jack’s holding a fishing net on a bamboo pole, and a large pickle jar.

‘Well,’ says Dora, ‘where on earth did you find those?’

‘In your shed. There’s treasure beyond measure in there.’

‘I should have a clear-out, shouldn’t I?’

‘I’m glad you haven’t. It’s been too long since I’ve been fishing, and you know what they say, you’re never too old to do the things you love. What do you say, Evan? Are you going to keep me company?’

Evan looks at Dora, as if he’s reluctant to leave her.

‘You go on, love,’ she says. ‘I’ll have a little nap. You can help me finish this one when you come back.’

The photo of Jack and young Evan with his jar of sticklebacks is still by the phone. As they walk by it, the picture they would make now would be very different. There are physical differences, of course – Evan isn’t smiling, and he’s getting closer to matching his grandfather’s height – but there’s a delightful simplicity in the photo which has been wiped away, smashed like a mallet taken to fine porcelain. It’s Jack’s hope that maybe something remains amongst the shards of what’s been broken, a pearl left undamaged, ready to be found.

As they walk down the track, Evan’s feet are hot in his wellingtons. Millie’s trotting at their heels, breaking away from time to time to sniff what she finds interesting in the verges. The day is warm again, the long

grass and cow parsley growing against the grey-stoned walls ruffled by a breeze which blows Evan's hair into his eyes.

Jack notices Evan's hair is getting long as Evan pushes it back behind his ears, and it occurs to him that someone must have been cutting his hair while he was gone. Before he was taken, there were trips to the barber's every four weeks, just Evan and Matt on Saturday mornings, Evan in the chair first while Matt read a magazine, then Evan given a comic while Matt took his turn. Who cut his hair when he was away from them? Was it a woman or a man? Was it done kindly and with care? Such a minor thing raises questions it's not his place to ask, and he pushes the thought away, not truly wanting to know. What concerns them is Evan's care now. He'll ask Dora to find her scissors and have a go, if Evan will allow it.

There are crickets singing in the grass, and overhead a skylark's risen, singing its heart out. Jack points up at it, and Evan follows his finger, straining to see the tiny spot in the sky.

'See that? She's a crafty bird. We've startled her and got too close to her nest, so now she's creating a distraction. She's over there, so you know the one place you won't find her nest is directly below her. Over there, or over there maybe. But she's drawing our attention from her little ones with that beautiful song, and here we are, looking and listening. That's quite a trick Mother Nature gave her, isn't it?'

At the bridge, the sun's warm on their backs. The stream's tumbling over pebbles, rippling the weeds rooted in the water, and tall trees cast shade over the banks, where the grass is lush and stippled with motley-coloured flowers. Where boulders have formed a calm pool a dragonfly hovers, its turquoise body wafting on diaphanous wings.

'It's a while since we've done this,' says Jack. 'Where do you think looks like a good spot?'

Evan makes for the pool. The sun on the water makes it hard to see, but somewhere under the surface there is movement.

Jack nods encouragement.

'I think you're right. That's where I'd be starting. Mind you keep your shadow behind you. We don't want to let them know we're here.'

Evan slips the net into the water and slides it cautiously along the

bottom. When he brings it up, as water dribbles back into the pool the mesh glitters, mimicking the wriggling of a fish.

But there's nothing there.

'Unlucky,' says Jack. 'Have another go.'

Evan tries again, and again, and again. Jack crouches beside him, peering into the water, as absorbed as Evan is in the task. The skylark has stopped singing. There's just an old man, his grandson and the soothing babble of the stream.

A vehicle's coming down the road, slowing as it draws close to the farm entrance. They hear the crunch of gravel under tyres and music on a radio before the engine is switched off. The music stops and a door slams.

A young man appears, wearing the shorts and red shirt of Post Office uniform. He's bringing letters, but rather than slipping them into the old mailbox nailed to the gatepost, he wanders the few paces to join Evan and Jack.

'Morning,' he says cheerfully.

'Morning, Ben,' says Jack. 'It's a beautiful day. I don't think you've met my grandson, Evan.'

Ben nods a hello.

'It's glorious,' he says, 'and too nice to be at work. I'd far rather be doing what you're doing. Have you caught anything?'

'Not yet,' says Jack, 'but we will.'

'I used to love fishing,' says Ben. 'I should get my rods out, next time I have a day off.'

'Not so easy to make time for it when there's a baby in the house,' says Jack. 'How's he doing, anyway?'

Ben grins.

'He's champion, absolutely champion. Except for all those nappies. I'm not so keen on them. Look, I reckon there's one down there, under that rock.'

The three of them peer at the water, and Evan directs his net. When he brings it up, there's a fish struggling in the bottom, the spines on its back stuck in the mesh.

Jack hands Evan the pickle jar, and Evan extricates the fish from the net.

When it's swimming in the jar, he holds it up for them all to see. And smiles.

'Look at that, I brought you a bit of luck,' says Ben. 'You have to be careful with them, as I remember. They're not called sticklebacks for nothing. Anyway, much as I should prefer to stay, I'd better get on.'

As Ben drives away, Evan places the pickle jar in the shade.

'We've still got it,' says Jack, all smiles. 'We haven't lost that old magic. He's a lovely lad, Ben, a lovely lad.'

For a little while, Evan fishes in silence.

'You know, people like Ben, they make you think, don't they?' says Jack, as if he's been considering the matter. 'You and I know too well there are bad people in this world – some very bad people – but I can look back from my great age, and if I think about it – really think about it – I can count the number of really bad people I've run across on the fingers of one hand. I'm not saying everyone's perfect, because they're not, and I'm not saying ordinary people don't sometimes do things they shouldn't be proud of. But people who are bad through and through – downright wrong 'uns who'd be better locked up with the key thrown away – the fact is, you don't run across many of them at all. When you meet somebody new, the chances are astronomically higher they'll be a cheerful sort like Ben. Now then, look down there. If you play your cards right I reckon you might get two together.'

There are roadworks on Oakland Way, and Naylor's been stuck at the temporary traffic lights for almost fifteen minutes. Some idiot has set them up wrong, so the main flow of traffic from Byron Road is only getting seconds to pass through.

When her phone rings, she's expecting a call from Hagen. She doesn't even glance at the caller display before pushing 'answer' on the dashboard.

'Hello?'

'Is that DS Naylor?' A woman's voice, a voice she knows. 'It's Claire Ferrers.'

'Claire! Hi, how are you?' She wasn't expecting this and doesn't have her story ready. She hasn't spoken to Claire or Matt in probably too long.

'I'm OK.'

‘And how’s Evan?’

‘Evan’s away at the moment. He’s staying with his grandparents in Yorkshire. I think the peace and quiet does him good.’

‘I can see it would. You must miss him, though.’

‘I got used to missing him while he was gone. At least I know where he is.’ Is there a reproach in there? Naylor dismisses the thought as the product of her guilty conscience.

‘So, what can I do for you?’

‘I was just wondering, we haven’t heard from you in a while, and I was wondering . . . Well, you know. Whether there have been developments, whatever you call them. I’m sorry, developments sounds a bit Sherlock Holmes.’

There have been developments at Ashridge, but Naylor doesn’t want to tell Claire what they are – that they all relate to other cases, and the resources they piled into Evan’s case have been re-assigned elsewhere.

‘To be honest, there’s not much to report.’ That much, at least, is true. ‘I’ve been looking into leads from the car, and DS Hagen’s pursuing another line of enquiry relating to some photographs of known offenders Evan reviewed.’ *But that was six weeks ago*, she thinks. *Since then we’ve done next to nothing on Evan’s case, thanks to staff shortages and Campbell’s ever-changing priorities.*

‘Did he identify someone, then?’ asks Claire. ‘I didn’t know that.’

‘Not exactly,’ says Naylor. ‘We’re just playing hunches and making routine enquiries. No stone unturned.’

‘So nothing to report?’

‘I’m afraid not. But we only need one good lead, and the dominoes will fall. In the meantime, what do you think about us trying to talk to Evan again? Do you think there’s any chance?’

Claire sighs.

‘Not unless things have changed in the last couple of days. He’s still said barely a word.’

‘Do you want to have another go with the psychiatrist? Or I could ask Rose to get in touch, see if he’ll respond to her. She’s got a bit of a magic touch in difficult cases.’

‘Maybe,’ says Claire vaguely. ‘I was just thinking if there were any chance of arrests being made, Evan might feel better. If they weren’t still out there, he might begin to feel safe.’

‘That’s an excellent suggestion, if only we could deliver. Believe me, Claire, we’re doing our absolute best.’ The lights change again, and Naylor moves slowly forward. ‘As soon as we have anything, you’ll be the first to know. And let me know if you think Rose can help.’

Finally moving and heading home, Naylor thinks about Claire, about how different she is from the woman she first met, about the effect this crime has had on the whole family. They need results so they can move on, and the constant reallocation of resources isn’t fair. How can there be results when they have no manpower?

A Tesco juggernaut pulls up two cars behind her at a roundabout, and Naylor looks at the driver in her rear-view mirror, wondering if she might see Lee Bryant at the wheel.

When she found Bryant in the interview room, she thought they were home and dry.

Something’s got to be done. Something which could cost her job if Campbell finds out.

To hell with it.

She reaches for the dashboard phone, and puts in a call to Ron.

Rain. Evan’s watching the storm from his bedroom window, counting the seconds between the flashes of forked lightning over Blackmire Ridge and the crashes of thunder which follow. Count slowly, Grandpa said. One thousand, two thousand . . . Each second is a mile in distance from the heart of the storm, which makes the storm very close indeed, right over the house, right over his bedroom. Grandma’s roses are taking a battering, and the oak trees in the copse on the opposite hillside, even they are bending in the wind.

The hills are becoming familiar. He likes to look out at them. At home, he doesn’t like looking out; there are too many people about, and he doesn’t want to be seen. But here, there’s nothing between him and the oak trees except the home field and the stream, and then just open, empty space. If he wanted to, he could take the chair away from his door, walk out of the

house and into the landscape, and he could walk as far as those trees. No one would bother him. No one would stop him.

Evan feels something shifting in his shoulders and his back. The muscles are looser, more relaxed.

It's true. No one would stop him. He can come and go as he pleases.

He's free.

TWENTY-FIVE

18 August

‘How are you doing, Ron?’

Naylor hands Ron Perdue his pint and, sitting down next to him, takes a sip of her orange-and-soda. The beer garden is all lawns and picnic tables, with an overhanging willow tree which almost manages to create a sense of country riverside. The only thing spoiling the illusion is the stink of diesel and the sound of heavy traffic from the road on the other side of the high wooden fence.

Ron is looking good, in Italian-style twill shorts and a polo shirt, deck shoes on his feet.

‘I’m doing all right. Just wondering to what I owe this honour.’

‘You’re looking very brown. You been away?’

‘Only as far as the bottom of the garden. She’s got me re-landscaping. So much for retirement, eh?’ He raises his pint to her. ‘Cheers. Whereas you, I have to say, have all the unhealthy colour of a copper doing too much overtime. You need to get out more, and I mean that literally. Get more sunshine and vitamin D, or you’ll be getting rickets.’

‘I take my daily vitamins,’ says Naylor, defensively. ‘I don’t look that bad, do I?’

She’s made all the effort she’s had time for: shower and shampoo, tracksuit bottoms, a vest top and canvas slip-ons. The other women in the beer garden are in summer cottons, pretty dresses and golden tans, real or fake. Most are wearing make-up, and Naylor wishes she’d spent ten minutes more getting ready, but that would have made her later than she already was, and Ron gets very snippy about people being late.

Ron smiles.

‘You always look good, Naylor. But you look tired. Goes with the territory, I know.’

‘You’re just feeling smug, now you’re looking at a future of long lie-ins.

Did June mind me borrowing you?’

‘As she says, that depends why you’re borrowing me. She says hello, by the way.’

‘Say hello back. And the reason I’m borrowing you is for a good cause.’

Ron looks at her over the top of his glass.

‘Namely?’

‘Evan Ferrers.’

‘Ah. I did wonder.’

A family group enters the garden, a young woman holding a thumb-sucking toddler by the hand, her partner with a protective hand on the tiny newborn strapped to his chest. The woman is glowing with something Naylor can’t name. The toddler is making a big thing of climbing on to a bench, and the partner is unstrapping the baby from his chest, cradling its head like it’s the most precious thing on earth.

Ron follows her glance.

‘I see people like that and it just makes me realise how often we fail,’ says Naylor. ‘Fail to keep people safe, I mean.’

‘On the balance of probabilities, they’ll get through life just fine,’ says Ron. ‘You know the statistics.’

‘We all know the statistics. I don’t suppose they’d impress Claire Ferrers.’

Ron shakes his head.

‘No, I don’t suppose they would. Why don’t you tell me what’s going on?’

‘It’s what’s not going on. We were all ticking along, following – by and large – Uncle Ron’s golden rules for a successful investigation. No stone unturned. You taught us well. But we’ve been pulled off it for the second time. Stones have been left face down in the mud.’

Ron sighs. The young woman is now cradling the baby, while the toddler’s becoming engrossed in a colouring book. The partner is walking purposefully into the pub, smiling in anticipation of a cold drink.

‘’Twas ever thus,’ says Ron. ‘Staff shortages have been a fact of policing since the year dot. I know you don’t rate Campbell, but don’t shoot the messenger. I don’t suppose it sits any easier with him than it does with

you. If you want to complain about it, write to your MP.'

'I was thinking of taking more effective steps than that.'

'Like what?'

'Like drafting in a support team on the quiet.'

Ron's eyebrows lift.

'Come on, Ron, it's nothing major. Nothing illicit involved. Just the kind of enquiries anyone could make, if they'd a mind to. If they had the training to ask questions without getting anyone's back up.'

'I feel the need for a bag of crisps,' says Ron, standing up. 'You want one?'

'Peanuts, please.'

Ron returns and throws two bags of Walker's on the table.

'No peanuts,' he says. 'Cheese and onion or prawn cocktail.'

Naylor grabs the prawn cocktail. Ron opens the cheese and onion.

'The way I see it,' he says, 'is this. I don't mind dabbling on the perimeters, looking at a few maps, applying my little grey cells from the comfort of my own sofa. But out there on the streets, that's a different matter.'

'OK, I get that,' says Naylor, dipping into her crisps. 'But I had a call from Claire Ferrers asking how we were getting on, and I felt so guilty. I didn't have the guts to say we didn't get a quick result – again – so we've moved on to something else, something where we might get to put a tick in the "solved" box. And it doesn't feel right to me. Evan's abduction was the most serious type of crime, and we're letting it slide by. We might be coppers, Ron, but there has to be some leeway. Under current circumstances, we can't play by every rule.'

'I like rules,' says Ron. 'If more people lived by them, we wouldn't be in this mess.'

'But we are in this mess. We're in a mess where Evan Ferrers has been abducted and abused and would without question have been murdered but for a massive stroke of luck, and nobody's even been interviewed for it, let alone convicted. What kind of message does that send out? If we don't get you in the early stages, you're golden, you've got away? That's not policing, Ron, that's anarchy.'

Ron's finished his crisps. He folds up the packet and sticks it between two slats of the table top.

'If I thought anyone was doing what you're suggesting on my watch, I'd have had them transferred out so fast their feet wouldn't have touched the floor. And if Campbell finds out we're having this conversation, he'll go ballistic, and he'd have the right to do so. You're undermining his authority. He's told you to drop it, and he'll take the public flak for that. It's why he earns more than you do.'

'He might take the flak, but he's not taking the phone calls. He's not the one Claire Ferrers's ringing for updates that aren't there.'

Ron looks her in the eyes.

'OK, hit me,' he says. 'What were you thinking?'

'I was looking at one of the previous owners of the car Evan was found in, the Ford Focus. Sheila Birch. She hadn't been the main driver of the vehicle. That was down to her husband, Brian. There was something there that gave me a feeling. You know how sometimes things just feel a bit off? It niggled me for days, and then it came to me. His story was, after the car was taken, he got a train back down south. Hartlepool into Euston, he said. And that didn't sound quite right, so I had a look on Google, and sure enough trains from Hartlepool go mostly into King's Cross. OK, that could've been misremembering or a slip of the tongue or maybe he took some obscure route, travelled via Blackpool or Leicester or Aberystwyth. It's not a solid lead, I know, and it may be nothing, but I just think it's worth a closer look, where exactly the car was taken from and what he was doing in Hartlepool. No stone unturned, right? This is a guy who doesn't want a company car. Who on earth turns down a company car for an 09-plate Ford?'

Ron frowns.

'Who indeed? That's an interesting one. So where are we talking about? Don't tell me you're wanting me to go all the way to County Durham?'

Naylor shakes her head.

'Not as far as that. This guy's offices are in Chelmsford. I didn't have time to visit while I was there but they might know something about his background. I'd really appreciate it, especially as there's nothing in it for

you. It's not as if I can even offer you expenses.'

'I've been to Chelmsford once or twice, but only to the prison. Haven't they got some gardens there, a stately home?'

'I've no idea.'

'I drove past signs to it, and I thought June might like to visit. I'll run it by her, and I'll let you know. And if I'm considering doing you this massive, illicit favour, I think you should be buying me another pint.'

Leaning on the sill of his bedroom window, Evan watches the Freelander drive slowly up the track, rocking as the tyres find the potholes. He's been alone for several hours, but alone is what he prefers to be, though some company is becoming tolerable to him now. He's OK with Grandma and Grandpa in their slow, bumbling ways, he can spend time with his dad, and his mum's all right if she isn't being over-attentively fussy. He remembers his mum before – pretty, super-efficient Mum when she was always so busy she barely had time for him, but that was then. He hasn't seen that mum in a long time. Mum now is nervous, anxious and worried about him, even though she doesn't say so. She's always giving him things he hasn't asked for – crisps, chocolate, cans of pop, new stuff to wear. Evan's happy to eat the crisps and chocolate and drink the pop, but he doesn't care what he wears. It's luxury just to have clothes that are clean and his size and his own, the same way it's luxury to be able to get clean, to have a bath or shower when he likes, with hot water and shower gel or Grandpa's old-fashioned soap, and towels to dry himself with that smell of fresh air from the washing-line. When he was . . .

He stops the thoughts of then, there, that place using a trick he's invented to shut them down. Closing his eyes, he empties his head of everything but a staircase, a silver spiral fantasy of a staircase leading upwards, like one you might find in one of those computer games like *Elvenar* or *World of Warcraft*, a stairway between worlds. And in his mind he slowly climbs, counting the steps as he goes up, up, up towards blue sky where birds are flying, plump Disney cartoon bluebirds which smile and chirp as they fly around him, and land, in his mind, on his shoulders and his head. When he reaches the high top of the staircase there's a stone platform surrounded by a wall overgrown with ivy, a sky-borne platform like the

turret of a fairytale castle, and that's where Evan stops and counts the birds. It's like the way Mum used to tell him to count sheep when he couldn't sleep, and he'd picture fluffy lambs jumping in a field. Now he counts bluebirds until the fear has diminished, and he feels it's safe to open his eyes.

He feels his bedroom here is like that imagined sanctuary, high up and isolated with a view of birds. Not so many birds, and they're not bluebirds, but swallows, jackdaws, crows, sparrows, kites and kestrels. Grandpa's been teaching him how to tell the difference between them all, even from far off, and Evan's read *A Kestrel for a Knave*, about Billy Casper – a youth about his own age – who found and trained a bird of prey. If Evan could do that, nothing would make him happier. What a great thing it would be, to have a wild creature as a companion, to set the bird free and have it come back to you . . .

The Freelanders pull up in front of the house. For a while nothing happens, and Evan can see Grandma and Grandpa sitting in the front seats, looking out, not speaking, watching swallows dip and loop over the rose garden. Then Grandpa reaches over, puts his arm round Grandma's shoulder and kisses the top of her head, a gesture so affectionate Evan feels a lump rise in his throat.

Grandpa gets out of the car and walks round it to open the door for Grandma. He holds out his hand to her as she gets out, and they walk slowly into the house arm in arm, Grandma making them stop to admire one of her rose bushes which is bowing under blush-pink blooms. Once they're in the house, Evan can hear the sound of the kettle boiling and the rattle of teacups, familiar noises he finds comforting. In a few minutes he hears the stairs creak, footsteps on the landing and a light knock at his door.

'Are you there, young man?'

Grandpa's voice.

Evan leaves the window and crosses to the door, where he lifts away the chair under the handle. A part of him remains cautious, and he opens the door just a crack at first, keeping his foot against it in case of the unexpected or the unwelcome, needing to be sure it is Grandpa, and that Grandpa is alone.

Jack's there with Evan's favourite mug – gold-rimmed with an airborne Spitfire – filled with sweet, milky tea, and on a flowered side-plate, a buttered cherry scone.

'Permission to board, Captain,' he says, and Evan smiles and gives a mock salute and steps back to let him pass, but he's unable to resist looking up and down the landing to check for unwanted visitors. He closes the door against intruders who aren't there.

Jack puts the tea and scone down on the bedside table.

'Your grandma thought you'd like a bit of something,' he says, sitting down on the bed. 'Just to put you on until tea-time. She'll no doubt be thinking you might starve between now and then. Women, eh?' He pats the bed beside him, encouraging Evan to sit, but Evan's wary. Instead, he sits down on the chair at the door.

A look crosses Jack's face which Evan can't quite read: weariness, sadness, despair. He glances at Evan, and musters a smile.

'I'm tired, old lad,' he says. 'Nearly all day in that hospital, and a long drive there and back. It's a good job you didn't come with us. You'd have climbed the walls with boredom, all that waiting about. Anyway.' The smile is gone. 'There's something I have to say to you, man to man, and I wish to God I didn't have to say it, because God knows you've had enough to cope with in your short life without having any more troubles piled on you. But that's life sometimes, my boy. Bad things come together.' Evan's expression is startled. 'It's about your grandma, Evan. You and I knew she wasn't very well, didn't we? We've known that for a while. But the truth is the doctor has told us today that she may not be with us very much longer. Grandma reckons she'll be here for Christmas but odds are that won't be the case. So what I want to say to you is this. You know you've been everyone's priority, don't you, your mum's and your dad's and mine and your grandma's. Of course you have. You're precious to us all, more precious than you'll ever know. But just for a short while – not too short, though, I most sincerely hope – your grandma needs us, and I need you to be a help to me. If you can be fully responsible for some of the work here, then I can have more time to look after your grandma, give her the care she needs so she can be home as long as possible. She wants to be at home, of course. It's a lot to

ask of you, I know, after what you've been through, and never think you're anything but top of my list. Do you understand me? Can we be a team, for your grandma's sake? You'll have to be out and about a bit more, and I know that sometimes makes you uncomfortable. I don't want you to be uncomfortable, but it's a state of emergency, isn't it? A real state of emergency.'

Jack looks at Evan, and Evan sees desolation in his grandfather's eyes. Silently he rises from his chair to sit down next to Jack, and takes the old man's hand in his youthful own.

As Grandpa says, it's a state of emergency, and that changes the rules. He knows it's time to speak, but when he opens his lips, it's as if his throat has closed through lack of use, and he can't put the words together.

Instead, he squeezes his grandfather's hand, and when Jack returns the pressure, he knows he's understood that Evan's answer is *Yes*.

TWENTY-SIX

21 August

Ron's left June at the RHS gardens at Hyde Hall with a promise to be back in time to meet up for lunch. He's not anticipating problems: a short drive to Petersen's, and a casual enquiry at reception as to whether his old mate Brian Birch might be around. Beyond that, the plan is less concrete, but he's got the confidence born of years of experience to know he can carry it off. And there's a maverick freedom in being outside the framework, not being bound by the rules: no warrant card, no traceability. Ron never did any undercover policing, but he's worked with men and women who have, and they all say the same. You can get away with so much more if no one knows who you are. Anonymity rules. If he finds anything of interest, he'll pass it on to Naylor, and she can get herself over here and ask the same questions on an official basis. Job done.

As it turns out, the job is done much quicker than he expects.

The satnav leads him on to an industrial estate, one of those places populated by small businesses you've never heard of, all doing essential, niche jobs not enough people need doing to ever make it big. Widget grinders and laundry services, motor factors and skip hire. And companies like Petersen's, compressed air and hydraulics specialists. Not everybody's everyday supplier.

And it would seem it's possible to be too niche.

When the satnav shows the chequered flag to tell Ron he's reached his destination, he stops the car. He's in the heart of the estate, surrounded by low brick buildings with a few cars and vans on their forecourts and very little, apparently, going on. What should be Petersen's building is between an electrical supplies place and a company specialising in tile adhesives, but there are no cars on its forecourt and no lights on inside.

He parks right in front of the door and gets out of the car. There's mesh on the windows, a collection of rubbish and blown leaves around the

doorstep and a piece of wood over the letter box to stop the delivery of mail. The only sign Petersen's were ever here is the nameplate by the door which no one's bothered to take down, a stylised image of a wind turbine and a strap-line reading *Pneumatic Technology Solutions*.

Ron looks around. At a road junction about a hundred metres away, there's a breakfast and burger van. He walks over to it.

Seeing Ron approach, the guy sitting behind the counter folds his copy of the *Mirror* and stands up, wiping his hands on his chef's trousers.

'All right, mate,' he says. 'What can I getcha?'

'Just a tea,' says Ron. 'Milk and one.'

'Milk and sugar's at the end of the counter.'

As the man pours hot water on to a tea bag in a polystyrene cup, Ron fishes in his pocket for change.

'You been doing this job long?' he asks.

'Couple of years.'

'Little goldmine, this set-up, I should think, in a spot like this. Captive clientele. No McDonald's or KFC to bother you.'

'I do all right.'

The man hands Ron his tea, and Ron gives him a two-pound coin.

'Keep the change.' At the end of the counter, he fishes out the tea bag and adds a splash of milk. As he's tearing open a sachet of sugar, he says, 'Actually, I was hoping to find a mate of mine I haven't seen in a while. He used to work for Petersen's down the road there, but looks like they've closed down or moved on.' He points to Petersen's old building. 'You don't know anyone who used to work there, do you?'

The man shakes his head.

'Nah, mate,' he says, sitting down and picking up his newspaper. 'Like I say, I've had this pitch a couple of years, and there's never been anyone in that place while I've been here.'

Ron stirs his tea.

'You got a lid for this?' he asks, and the man hands him one. 'Looks like I'll have to look for my mate elsewhere. Thanks for the tea.'

Back in his car, Ron sips his brew and stares thoughtfully at what was once Petersen's UK office. Seems Naylor's hunch was right about those

stones still lying in the mud. The pity is, she didn't turn this one over sooner.

'Let me show you how this works,' says Jack, and he moves along the bonnet of the old Land Rover he uses for running the sheep so Evan can squeeze in beside him. The sun is hot, and Evan's glad to be in the bonnet's shade. 'This is called a distributor cap, and these leads here are where the sparks come from to fire the engine. So when this old girl is running a bit rough, the first thing to try is to do what I'm doing here, and just tickle the ends up with a bit of sandpaper. If you had a matchbox in your pocket, you could use that. We just need to make the ends nice and shiny again, like this.' He shows Evan what he's doing, then hands the sandpaper to him so he can have a go. 'Not too much elbow grease. Just enough to get them nice and clean. That's it.'

When all the points are done, Jack re-connects them and checks everything looks sound.

'Right then. You jump in the driver's seat, and when I shout, you fire her up.'

Evan beams, and runs to get in. Jack follows, and leans inside to check that the Land Rover's in neutral.

'Wait till I give you the thumbs up,' he says.

Jack takes up his position under the bonnet, and when he gives the signal, Evan solemnly turns the key. The engine fires, running less roughly than it usually does.

Jack gives another thumbs up and drops the bonnet down.

'You've done a good job there,' he says to Evan. 'You'll make a decent mechanic, one day. Shall we take her for a spin, make sure she's OK?'

Evan seems uncertain.

'Go on, shift over,' says Jack, and Evan clambers over the gearstick, into the passenger seat. 'Let's go and see what we can find.'

Jack drives them down the pot-holed lane. As they pass over the stream, he stops, and from their respective windows they peer down into the water, looking for fish.

'They're hard to spot when the sun's on the water,' he says. 'But we know they're in there, don't we?'

He follows the lane in the direction of the village, but before they reach it, he takes a turn up an even narrower lane, where the frothy heads of cow parsley brush the Land Rover's sides. Evan's looking out over dry-stone walls into meadows alight with yellow buttercups, at doe-eyed cows swishing away flies as they chew the grass. In the corner of one field, there's a ramshackle barn where rampant nettles are growing through the blades of an abandoned plough.

They pass a sign announcing a village where Evan hasn't been before, which turns out to be not much more than a well-kept green with a duck pond, surrounded by a scattering of grey stone houses and cottages. One of the cottages has been converted into a post office, and Jack parks outside.

'This place here,' he says, 'is a bit off the beaten track, but it holds a closely guarded secret. This little place just happens to sell the best ice-cream in all England. Come on, I'll show you.'

He climbs out of the Land Rover. Evan doesn't follow, so Jack walks round and opens his door.

'Come on, lad. It's just one old lady and a bad-tempered cat.'

Reluctantly, Evan gets out, and follows Jack as far as the post office door.

Inside, the woman behind the counter might be older than Jack, but she's not dressing her age. Her hair's tied in a ponytail reaching below her waist, and her clothes are sixties hippy: purple cords, big hoop earrings, a crocheted jacket in rainbow colours. She should look odd, eccentric, but somehow on her the style looks cool.

'Afternoon, Mona,' says Jack.

Mona gives him a big smile.

'Hello, stranger.' Evan hears an American accent. 'What blows you into town?'

'The quest for some of your ice-cream. This young man is my grandson. Evan, Mona, Mona, Evan.'

'Pleased to make your acquaintance,' says Mona.

'We've just been doing some repairs on the old bus.'

'What, more repairs? Buy something newer, Jack.'

Jack shakes his head.

‘There’s plenty of mileage in her yet. But it’s been hot work, so I thought what better way to cool us down than a couple of scoops of your famous ice-cream. Come in, Evan, and choose what you’d like.’

He holds out his hand to encourage Evan inside the shop, and Evan takes a tentative step in the direction of the freezer, where the tubs of ice-cream are on display.

‘All hand-made,’ says Mona. ‘All from our own herd, and all natural flavourings. What takes your fancy, Evan? Strawberry, chocolate, vanilla, rhubarb and ginger . . .’

‘That’s for me,’ says Jack. ‘A double scoop. Evan, what are you having?’

Evan ventures a couple of steps closer, and peers down at the display. He points at the chocolate. When he doesn’t speak, Mona gives Jack a quizzical look.

‘He’s a man of few words, is Evan,’ says Jack, touching his grandson on the shoulder. ‘I expect he’d be wanting a Flake in that, if you have one.’

As Mona and Jack talk – the vagaries of the parish council, vandalism of a phone booth, the upcoming agricultural show – Evan carries his ice-cream outside. It’s sweet and rich; the sunshine is warm and welcome. Intrigued by a mallard with ducklings on the pond, he wanders over there, and takes a seat on a waterside bench.

Jack and Mona watch him through the post office window.

‘Poor, poor boy,’ says Mona. ‘I can’t imagine how you’re all coping.’

‘One day at a time,’ says Jack. ‘Like re-acclimatising a beaten dog. We’re trying to teach him not everyone is bad, lead him back to the view of the world he used to have.’

‘That’s a long road, after what he’s been through.’

‘It’s a very long road, and progress is slow. But he is making progress, and he’s our boy, so whatever it takes, we’re more than glad to do it.’

At home that evening, Ron opens up the Google browser on his laptop and types in ‘Petersen’s Chelmsford’.

There’s a website.

He clicks on it, and a professional-looking page fills the screen, with a logo and the same strap-line he’s seen on the doorplate: *Pneumatic*

Technology Solutions. There's a picture of a wind farm and another of some kind of machined metal part whose use Ron couldn't begin to guess, and a few lines about Petersen's being established in Holland in the 1960s and now being at the forefront of wind-farm technologies.

On the menu across the top are four buttons. Ron clicks on them, one by one. The Products page is empty. So is Current Projects. On the Gallery page, there's a single line of text asking the reader to use the Contact page to view it. The Contact page appears to be live, though there's no phone number, only a form to submit his own details.

Thoughtfully, Ron considers. He opens a new page on his browser and makes another Google search: Petersen's pneumatic.

A very different website appears, the website of a major international organisation, fully loaded with lists of satisfied clients, pictures of smart office buildings and men in high-vis jackets supervising installations. The Products pages are many, filled with obscure and expensive precision-engineered parts. The Contact page has phone numbers, an email address, and social media buttons – Facebook, Twitter, a couple of platforms Ron's never heard of – inviting clicks. The About Us page opens with the short paragraph Ron has seen on the other, somewhat truncated site, but goes on at considerably more length about government contracts and presence in other countries. There's a list of Petersen's worldwide offices. Chelmsford isn't on it.

June calls to him from the kitchen that dinner's ready. Ron shuts down the browser and closes the laptop lid. But as they're eating dinner, he tells June what he's found, and as he's telling her, she suggests what he's already thought to himself: that he should try and get in touch with the creator of the dummy website via the Contact Us page.

'Use a fake name,' she says. 'Set up a new email address, Yahoo or Hotmail, one of those junk kind.'

But Ron's reluctant, thinking he's getting too involved.

'Well, pass it on to Rachel, then, if you don't want to do it,' says June. 'Then it's official.'

When the table's cleared and the dishwasher's loaded, Ron returns to his laptop and watches it power up. Opening a Google window, he re-loads the

dummy website. It looks harmless enough, but why is it there? He clicks on Contact Us, and for a few minutes stares at the empty fields asking for his details. Resisting with difficulty the temptation to fill them in, he does the sensible thing, and dials Naylor's number.

Dora's sleeping deeply, almost comatose from the opiates prescribed for her pain, but Jack's wide awake in the dark, thinking over the future, trying to picture it without Dora, trying to persuade himself he can cope with her loss.

When the shouting begins, it doesn't trouble him; he knows how to deal with it. Climbing from the bed, he moves quietly to the bedroom door, feeling his way carefully in the dark, anxious not to disturb Dora or put any worry on her.

The landing light is on. It's always been left on since Evan arrived, for times such as this, in case light can be any help to him with his night terrors. They don't come every night; sometimes days go by now without them suffering broken sleep. Claire has left medication for if it gets too bad, but Jack has his own method which everyone prefers to the drugs – especially Evan, who hates the morning-after feeling from the tablets, the spaced-out weirdness and tiredness which lasts all day and (far worse) reminds him of that place.

Outside Evan's door, Jack listens. There's momentary quiet, and it's possible the nightmare's passed and Evan's fallen back into dreamless sleep. If there's a chance he might be sleeping peacefully, Jack doesn't want to disturb him. But listening with an ear pressed to the door, he can hear mumbling, a low, disturbing murmur of *no no no no no*, the soundtrack of some terrible memory his grandson shouldn't have. Jack's heard it many times before but still it gives him chills. The mumbling subsides, and there's a silence; then a shout which makes him jump, and he knows it's time to act before the yelling starts in earnest.

He and Evan have a pact: no barricaded doors by night. Jack won the battle for access by arguing the house's age and the dangers of fire. Turning the handle cautiously, he opens the door a crack. Startling Evan is to be avoided at all costs. In the early days, Matt made this mistake, and Evan flew at him and punched him in the face.

He opens the door further. Evan is subsiding back into mumbling, and this is a good time to begin. Slipping through the door, Jack grabs the book he needs from the nightstand, sits down in the chair and by the light from the landing, begins to read aloud.

'Biggles leaned out of the cockpit of his Vandal amphibian aeroplane, pushed up his goggles, and peered ahead anxiously.'

'Grandpa?' Evan's voice is drowsy. Jack can see his eyes reflecting the light.

'I'm here, son,' says Jack. 'It's just you and me.'

Evan's eyes close, and Jack reads on, an entire paragraph before the import of what has happened hits him. In these dark watches of the night where time seems suspended, the exchange was entirely natural.

Evan spoke to him. Evan actually spoke to him. Jack's lost his place on the page, and it takes him a few moments to find his last sentence and regain his rhythm. But then he reads on, page after page until Evan's breathing is even and Jack's certain he's immersed in peaceful sleep.

Back in his own room, Dora hasn't stirred. His side of the bed is cold, and he presses up against her, trying to push away the thought that she won't always be there.

TWENTY-SEVEN

22 August

As Hagen enters the office the next morning, his earphones are in, so he doesn't hear Naylor call his name. He's wanting to hear the end of the track he's listening to, and by the time it's finished and the earphones are out, Naylor's standing right next to him.

'Morning,' says Naylor, and Hagen jumps. 'Anyone could whack you over the head and rob you when you've got those things in. Doesn't it worry you, when you're walking down the street, that you're a target?'

Hagen grins.

'I don't do much walking,' he says. 'Everywhere I go, I dance.'

Naylor narrows her eyes.

'You're in a very good mood,' she says. 'What's going on?'

'I met the girl of my dreams,' says Hagen. 'Well, she was last night, anyway.'

'Forget her for now,' says Naylor. 'I've got a job for you, a nice little desk job. Come and look at this.'

Hagen follows her to her desk, where she pulls up the Petersen's dummy website on her monitor. She had a good look at it last night following her phone conversation with Ron, but if she's going to try and reel anyone in, she wants to do it from an official computer.

'Brian Birch, last official owner of our red Ford Focus and alleged employee of Petersen's pneumatics.' She clicks on a couple of the menu buttons. 'See? Next to nothing there. To be honest, I'm not optimistic this will take us anywhere. Chances are all Brian Birch is guilty of is deceiving his wife, for reasons which will likely turn out to be entirely personal. If he's lost his job and daren't tell her, he won't be the first or the last. But I want you to have a good look at him. No stone unturned.'

'You've been talking to Ron.'

'Here's your starter for ten, address and mobile number.' She gives him

a piece of paper. 'See if he's got any form, anything at all. If there are parking tickets, I want to know where they were issued. Bank statements, definitely have a look at those. His wife thinks he works somewhere he doesn't, so I'm interested in sources of income. Put in a request for credit card info as well, and phone records. Social media maybe, though he may not be the Facebook type.'

'With respect,' says Hagen, 'I'm happy to do all that, but isn't this one for the white-collar guys?'

'It would be if they had any resources, but they're more strapped than we are. So roll your sleeves up and see what you can find.'

'What about the website? Should I try and make contact?'

Thinking of entrapment protocols, Naylor hesitates.

'Yes, why not? But don't use anything official, not yet. Campbell says I'm supposed to be leaving this alone, so I can't authorise it, but you've probably got all kinds of random email addresses you could use. Or if you haven't, set one up. Use your imagination. And for God's sake leave the earphones out. I'm starting to think you're antisocial.'

Hagen spends a few minutes setting up a new Yahoo email address, picking a jokey username, verifying it via his mobile, setting up an email notification on his phone. Opening the Contact page on the fake website, he tries to come up with a name halfway between believable and dubious, the kind any bloke might pick to register on a porn site. He comes up with Mick Rutter and keys it in below the new email address. When he comes to the 'Message' field he's stuck, and settles on *I'm interested in your products and price list*.

Suitably generic, he thinks, and presses Send.

Ron has got the bit between his teeth. Naylor's given him the remaining two addresses the DVLA supplied as previous owners of the Ford Focus, and the first is an address in Sevenoaks where traffic's terrible and there's nowhere to park. Figuring people are out at work, Ron takes a risk on blocking a driveway, and still has a three-minute walk to where he needs to go.

The address is an old Edwardian house, long ago converted into flats. There's a scrubby garden out front where what was once a lawn is now

overgrown with weeds, and a For Sale sign which looks like it might have been there quite a while. The curtains at the ground-floor windows are floaty, orange and drawn, which immediately makes Ron think it's occupied by someone with some kind of habit.

The intercom at the door has a dent in it as if someone might have gone at it with a claw-hammer. There are buzzers for five flats, but only three of them have names, and none of them is the name he wants: Jennifer Lambert.

He presses one of the buzzers anyway, and waits. There's no answer, so he tries a second.

There's crackling, and a voice that sounds very far away says, 'Yes?'

It's hard to tell if it's a man or a woman.

'Can you let me in?' says Ron.

'Who is it?'

There's a short silence in which Ron doesn't reply.

'Fuck off then,' says the voice.

Ron presses a third buzzer. Moments later, he sees the orange curtain move, and stands back so whoever's looking has a clear view of him and can see he's respectable. He gives a casual wave.

The curtain drops, and the intercom buzzes. Ron moves fast to open the door before he misses his chance.

Inside the hallway, the decor is as he'd expect: shabby, drab, depressing. Someone's left a bicycle at the bottom of the stairs which makes it difficult to move. From somewhere upstairs there's a smell of curry.

A door on his left opens. The man standing there is again what Ron might have predicted: long hair, funny slogan T-shirt, five days' stubble, bad teeth.

'Can I help you, mate?' he says, in a way which suggests helping Ron is the last thing on his mind.

'I hope so,' says Ron. 'I'm looking for a lady called Jennifer Lambert, Flat Four. You know her?'

'What's she done, then?'

'I'm just asking if you know her.'

The man gives a slow, lupine smile.

‘Don’t give me that. You’re a copper. It’s written all over you. Not the type for trouble, I didn’t think she was. I know ’em all, I do, I see ’em come and I see ’em go. But she’s been gone a while, ’as Jen.’

‘Any idea where to?’

‘She met up with some South African, went to live with him over there. He was a doctor or something, as I remember. That was the last I heard. She said she’d send a postcard, but she never did. Anything I can help you with?’

‘I don’t think so,’ says Ron, opening the front door to let himself out. ‘But thanks anyway.’

The drive from Sevenoaks to Woking takes longer than it should, but once Ron hits the A3, progress improves. As he’s driving, he calls Naylor and tells her he’s found one more dead end.

‘Not going too well, is it?’ says Naylor. ‘Still, you never know. No stone unturned.’

The address in Woking is a terraced house whose front garden has been bricked over for parking. There’s a car parked there now, a bright orange Mini Cooper. As he climbs from his own car, the traffic lights at the end of the road turn green. The waiting traffic moves on and the road falls into a brief hiatus, quiet enough to hear the shouts from a school playing field a couple of streets away.

It was Ron who taught Naylor to be suspicious of doorbells. He knocks, and waits, and in a minute or so a woman answers, a woman pretty good for her age, fit-looking in tracksuit bottoms and a high-vis Lycra top. Her cheeks are pink, as if she might just have been running.

‘Yes?’

Ron gives a bright, non-threatening smile.

‘I wonder if you might be able to help me,’ he says. ‘I’m looking for a lady by the name of Lindsey Stockman.’

‘That’s me.’

‘I’m sorry to disturb you. Is it Miss Stockman or Mrs?’

‘Neither.’

‘I’m sorry to disturb you, Ms Stockman, but I’m hoping you might be able to help me with a problem. It’s about a car you used to own.’

‘Really? What car?’

‘A red Ford Focus.’

Lindsey Stockman thinks.

‘Yes, we had one of those, but not for very long. I like something a bit smaller, like my Mini. Why do you think I can help you with anything?’

‘I’ve got an insurance issue,’ says Ron. ‘I’m trying to prove it’s a long-standing problem. Did you have any problems with it while you owned it?’

‘What sort of problems?’

‘Brakes. Anything in that department?’

Lindsey shakes her head.

‘Not that I’m aware of. My other half drove it more than me. It was in my name but it was his car really. I’m sorry, I don’t think I can help you. If you don’t mind, I’m just getting ready for work.’

‘If I could just ask you,’ says Ron. ‘I don’t suppose you can remember who you sold it to?’

She shakes her head again.

‘It was nothing to do with me. What I know about cars you could write on a postage stamp. He put it on eBay after he set his heart on a nice little Alfa. If you want to know who bought it you’d have to ask the DVLA.’ A thought seems to strike her, and her eyes narrow. ‘How did you get this address, anyway?’

‘Off the log book,’ lies Ron. ‘I just wondered if you might have sold it to a friend, anything like that.’

Lindsey shakes her head.

‘I’ve no idea who he sold it to.’

‘Can I have a word with him? Maybe he’ll remember.’

‘He and I aren’t together any more,’ says Lindsey. ‘I’m sorry, I have to go.’

Ron rings Naylor on his way home.

‘I’m sorry, kiddo,’ he says. ‘I did my best, but I don’t think there’s anything there.’

Naylor sighs.

‘Thanks for trying, anyway. At least there are two less stones in the mud.’

As she hangs up, the office is quiet. Hagen has left a note on his desk asking her to give him a call. She looks across the room at the whiteboards and the map they've been using to log activity.

There are a few spare pins to the side of the map, and Naylor chooses a red one and a green one. She sticks the green one in the heart of Sevenoaks to mark Ron's visit there, and one on the outskirts of Woking as a visible record of his conversation with Lindsey Stockman.

Standing back, she considers the map. No matter how she looks at it, there's no pattern to be seen, no connections to be made. But as Ron always used to say, one small piece of intelligence can make all the dominoes fall.

Back at her desk, Naylor puts in a call to Hagen, and reports the disappointing news that Ron appears to have come away with empty hands.

Since the last hospital visit, Ainsclough Top has become a place of much activity. There are regular visitors – palliative care nurses, carers and the local GP – interspersed with Dora's many friends and family, some of whom she hasn't seen for years and have travelled great distances to be here. They are welcomed with laughter, hugs and tears.

Evan might have struggled with this influx, except that most of the visitors are women, and all without exception are kind. They respect his wish not to interact with them directly, accepting his silent presence at mealtimes, since Jack has always gently insisted Evan eat downstairs at the table.

And in truth, he's leaving behind the disquieting, almost spectral Evan who came back to them. The Evan who sits down to meals, though quiet, takes some interest in those around him, listening to conversations even if he doesn't join them, sometimes smiling at jokes and trying to make himself useful in the fetching and carrying of the endless stream of plates and dishes, tea and cakes. If the comings and goings of people gets too much, he seeks sanctuary in the barn, where one of the feral cats that stalk the rodents there has had a litter of kittens. Evan's found a vantage point overlooking the cosy nest the mother-cat has made in the straw, and is happy to lie quietly on the bales, observing them from above.

Claire has been spending much time at the farm too, with Matt as a regular visitor. The change of air has benefited her in some ways – a light

tan has lifted the paleness from her face, and she's put on a little weight from eating properly. With people to cook for, the effort seems worthwhile. Life might be looking brighter, except that Dora's decline casts a shadow over them all.

On a rare afternoon when there are no visitors, Claire goes to find Evan in the barn. Seeing her approaching, he puts a finger to his lips to stop her speaking, and beckons her over to his observation point. Claire scrambles over the heavy bales, the dust of the sweet-smelling straw tickling her nose, reminding her of Sunday morning riding lessons in the days of her childhood when she was pony-mad.

She smiles at Evan, and he smiles back.

He points down to the nest.

'Oh, aren't they gorgeous!' whispers Claire, and Evan finds himself regretful that he can't talk to her about the kittens. He wants to tell her the names he's given them, about when their eyes opened and about the poor, tiny one that died, how he removed it while the mother-cat was away hunting and buried it in the garden.

She asks how many there are, then answers her own question by making a count.

'Are there seven, or eight? I'm trying to count the heads, but they're so wriggly, aren't they?' She lapses into silence, enjoying alongside Evan the antics of the newborns.

'I have to go,' she says at last. 'There are some things for Grandma I have to pick up from the doctor's, and we need something for dinner.'

He nods that he understands and watches as she leaves, before giving his attention back to the kittens. He hears his mother's car drive away, and then immerses himself in the mewling from the nest and the calling of the swallows overhead.

TWENTY-EIGHT

29 August

Hagen's been occupied with other things – while most of the team is working on the Foxley Wood Road shooting, he's fielding everything else, and there seems to be a constant stream of claims on his attention, requests for him to make phone calls and visits, tie up loose ends and chase lines of enquiry no one else can spare the time to deal with.

When Dallabrida drops a hefty brown envelope on his desk, Hagen is on the phone, on hold for a forensic pathology lab he's been asked to call. The data requests he filed the previous week are all but forgotten.

'Here you are,' says Dallabrida. 'I saw this with your name on it downstairs. No need to thank me for my kindness. My usual fee's a pint.'

Hagen looks down at the envelope and frowns. That's definitely his name on the front.

'Cheers, mate,' he calls after Dallabrida's retreating back, and Dallabrida raises his hand.

With the phone still to his ear, Hagen breaks the seal on the envelope and pulls out a couple of the sheets it contains. Bank account data for Brian William Birch.

For a moment, the name rings no bells. Then he recalls the Ferrers case, and Naylor's request for this information. There's a voice in his ear at last from the pathology lab. Hagen pushes the papers back inside the envelope and gives his attention to the woman who's finally taken his call.

It's getting late when Hagen remembers the envelope. The office is quieter, winding down; the day's been hot, and he's been looking forward to a cool beer on his way home. But his conscience pricks him over the Ferrers case – he's the only one doing any work on it at all now, as far as he knows – and so he decides he'll give it ten minutes before he leaves.

What did Naylor say to him? Look for sources of income. He pulls the sheaf of papers from the envelope, finding a lot of paper covering two

years' worth of transactions.

The top sheets are statements from a joint NatWest account – Brian William Birch and Sheila Marie Birch – and unsurprisingly there are hundreds of transactions representing the minutiae of everyday life. In the debits he sees payments, among many others, to Asda, Costa Coffee, Total petrol, Domino's Pizza, the National Lottery and Pets at Home. There are ATM withdrawals within the Chelmsford area and the usual utilities – Essex and Suffolk Water, British Gas – credit card payments and store-card bills. In the credits there are far fewer entries, mainly returns to stores and refunds, making it look as if Mrs Birch might be a keen shopper who loses interest in her purchases very quickly, and unshops on a regular basis. A sign, maybe, of a woman with too much time on her hands. What's funding those purchases – apart from the credit cards – is what appear, without close scrutiny, to be regular credits from a company payroll, identical amounts month on month with *Petersen Pneumatics Plc* in the payee reference field.

Hagen grabs a yellow highlighter pen and marks a couple of these entries. Placing the sheets from the joint account to one side, he moves on to the next account, a NatWest current account in Brian Birch's name only. For this account, there are only a couple of sheets, listing a few cash deposits – not huge amounts, but all four figures – and regular monthly payments made via standing order to his joint account with Sheila on the 28th of the month. The amounts of the payments tally exactly with what appear to be payroll credits in the joint account.

Hagen highlights these corresponding entries and stares at the sheets in front of him. Brian Birch is faking his salary. Why would he do that? In Hagen's experience, the most common reason for that kind of deception is embarrassment over a job loss. Quite possibly, as Naylor suggested, Birch has been made redundant and daren't tell his wife. But if he's been made redundant and is no longer an employee of Petersen's, who is he working for? He searches for the current balance on Birch's personal account, and finds it a little over £8,000. That's not someone who's hurting for money – Hagen wishes his own account were only half as healthy – but it's all coming from cash, and that's a red flag. Generous deposits in cash are, as often as not, at least marginally suspect, signalling funds from a range of

activities from tax evasion and illegal dumping of waste to drugs-peddling and people-trafficking. Where's Birch on that spectrum? However he's been making his daily bread, for some reason he doesn't want his wife or the tax man to know about it.

There's more in the envelope, statements from a Lloyds savings account. What catches Hagen's eye first about this account is the amount of money it holds. Brian Birch has over £30,000 in savings. That's not unusual for the man in the street – a legacy, a house sale or even a lottery win would cover it easily – but Birch's money hasn't come from any of those sources. Like his personal current account, this money has come from cash, a string of deposits that have begun to add up to a significant amount. For a man who seems to be unemployed, Brian Birch is on a very nice little earner.

There's one thing outstanding. Hagen picks up the phone and dials the tech guys on the second floor. The girl who answers sounds flustered and weary.

Hagen states his name and his business.

'Relating to a mobile phone owned by a Brian William Birch,' he says. 'We were looking for whatever you've got on that from June thirtieth onwards.'

She's gone a while, hunting through the completed requests, and he's expecting her to say he can come up and pick up the sheets. The kind of records he's asking for commonly run into hundreds of calls.

'Two inbound calls from Chelmsford, Essex on the thirtieth,' she says, at last. 'Phone switched off in the Aylesbury area the same day.'

There's silence.

'Is that it?' asks Hagen.

'That's it.'

'It's never been switched on again?'

'Nope. Not so far.'

'OK,' says Hagen slowly. 'Thanks very much for your help.'

TWENTY-NINE

30 August

Hagen's back at his desk early the next morning, pulling out the envelope with Brian Birch's bank statements and glancing over them, re-confirming what he found last night. He needs to alert Naylor to what he's uncovered, but in the meantime, he's feeling inspired to do some digging in other areas.

He pulls up Naylor's notes on the theft of the car. There's a crime number from Cleveland Police and the basics of the incident: a red Ford Focus and its registration number, reported stolen from outside a Costcutter on Chatham Road, Hartlepool, at 18.43 on the 16th of June.

A prickle of intuition runs down Hagen's spine. Something about the timing isn't right. It takes him only moments to check, and he doesn't even need to go through their own database to do so. News reports from Google confirm Evan Ferrers was found in the back of that Focus on 16 June, but the first reports are timed before 5 p.m. They'd been making the assumption Birch reported the car stolen before Evan was found, because that's the way it usually is. Car reported stolen, car turns up days later in some kind of criminal use.

But Birch's car must have been missing for at least a few hours before he picked up the phone. Why would that be the case?

When Naylor comes in, Hagen gives her the full run-down: the cash deposits in Birch's accounts, the switched-off phone, the mismatch on the stolen car timing.

'Great work, Brad,' she says. 'If we can get the guys who nicked it on CCTV, we might get an ID and start to really put things together. The bad news is, I think you should go up there.'

'To Hartlepool? No worries. My nan lives near there. She'll be pleased to see me.'

'It's a long drive. You'd better take the train, or you'll be gone for days.'

I'll talk to Campbell and tell him what's going on so he can authorise it. Make contact with Cleveland before you go, tell them you want to look at any CCTV footage they can get hold of for that location on that date, and see if they can dig out details on the call reporting the vehicle stolen. Allelujah, we might be making progress here at last.'

Cleveland Police Headquarters is an anomaly of a building, a modern, red-brick fortress amongst the vintage buildings of old Hartlepool – the Masonic Hall (now a tea-room and wedding venue), the Town Hall theatre, the Engineers' Club and Snooker Room. Hagen announces his business and signs in, and waits in the reception area only a few minutes before a plain-clothes officer about his own age comes to greet him.

'DC Alex Heron,' he says. 'Pleased to meet you.'

'Pleasure,' says Hagen, and here amongst friends, already his accent is lapsing further into its north-eastern origins.

'We'll take the stairs,' says Heron, leading the way. 'You'd wait all day for the lift.'

They pick up coffee from a machine, and in an open-plan office almost identical to the one he's left in Berkshire, Hagen pulls up a chair to Heron's desk.

'So, you know what I'm after,' he says. 'This is all connected to the Ferrers case, the abduction.'

Heron shakes his head.

'A bad business,' he says. 'The sooner someone's doing time for it, the better.' He has a copy of the original report of the Focus theft and places it in front of Hagen. 'The theft was reported online.'

Hagen glances over the printout. Birch gave his full name and his address in Chelmsford. The phone number he provided is a mobile, the same one that's since gone dead.

Heron opens up Google Maps and finds the location of the reported theft: Chatham Road.

'It's an interesting one, this. Bearing in mind the seriousness of the offence, we've done you a favour and pulled in what CCTV we can find, which has come from some interesting sources. What line did you say the car's owner is in?'

‘Pneumatics,’ says Hagen. ‘Allegedly. Offshore wind farms, stuff like that.’

‘See, if your man was interested in wind turbines, he’d need to be down the coast a-ways, down at Redcar. The only offshore wind farm plans they had for around Hartlepool got turned down last year. Which makes you wonder why your man was parked up on Chatham Road, in an inland residential area. So we got CCTV from the Costcutter where he says he was and from another place of possible interest.’

Heron zooms in on the Google map, grabs the tiny figure to switch to Street View, and lands it on Chatham Road. The screen changes from a map to 360-degree-view photographs and the outside of the Costcutter. With a few twists of his mouse, he’s refocused on another building further down the street.

Hagen stares.

‘A children’s centre.’

‘Run by the council, mostly for the benefit of children under five.’

‘Well, what the hell.’

‘Begs the question again, what was your man doing parked up near there?’

‘Have you looked at the footage?’

‘Not yet. Thought I’d leave that to you. There’s an office you can use down the hall.’

Hagen starts with the images from the Costcutter, quickly finding the date and time Birch reported the car stolen and working back from there. He goes back an hour, two hours, three. In seven hours of footage, there’s no sign at all of the red Ford Focus.

He switches to the footage from the children’s centre, scrolling backwards through the hours from late morning to the middle of the night, watching in the daylight hours a parade of parents and pregnant women with small children and babies. Sticking with this one in case there has been, after all, a mix-up with the dates, he backtracks all the way to the previous morning, then goes back to the Costcutter footage and does the same with that. Up and down Chatham Road for forty-eight hours, there’s no sign at all of a red Ford Focus.

Brian Birch's report of his car being stolen appears to be false.

Hagen takes out his phone and texts Naylor the outline of what he's found, and he's about to put away his phone when he sees an unfamiliar icon on the screen. With a jolt, he realises there's email in his new account, the one set up for non-existent Mick Rutter as bait for the fake Petersen's website. He clicks the link and opens up the message.

It's from a generic-sounding address – *info@petersens.org* – and it's short. *We have a range of products to suit a variety of tastes. Prices vary according to requirements. Please supply a phone number and a convenient time for us to call and discuss your needs.* There's no signature and no attachments, but it's a reply. Whatever the status of the website, the *Contact Us* link is live. Now all they have to do is find out who's on the other end.

Hagen forwards the email to Naylor without adding anything to it and texts her again.

Like Naylor said, progress at last.

THIRTY

4 September

It's a while since Naylor's been on shift this early, but this is an operation she couldn't bear to miss. Hagen's done the driving and she's dozed some of the way, but she's still grateful when he pulls into a twenty-four-hour petrol station and comes out with hot coffee. He offers her a chocolate croissant, but she declines.

'Too early for me.'

'It's never too early for breakfast,' says Hagen.

He eats his croissant and hers as they drive the last half-mile, and finds a place to park behind an unmarked police van.

Twenty minutes before first light, the birds are singing, pitting themselves against the background of traffic already running on the A12. She and Hagen join the group from the Essex force gathered in a residents' parking area around the corner from Pentland View. They're talking quietly but are fired up and raring to go. The operation's commander is young and keen, checking one last time everyone knows where they should be, making it clear to Naylor and Hagen they're bringing up the rear.

At ten to the hour, the signal's given, and the team heads for the property, the tramp of boots heavy on the air. When they reach the house, those designated to cover the rear melt away, and Hagen and Naylor find a safe spot behind a neighbour's car.

There are lights on in the house, and that makes the commander wary. He'd rather deal with a target still asleep.

The officer with the big red door key – the locker-room name for the battering ram – moves into position, and the commander raises his hand, glancing round to be sure everyone's ready. Talking quietly into the microphone clipped to his flak vest, he receives confirmation they're all set round the back.

He drops his hand and hammers on the door.

‘Police!’

The big red door key goes into play, pounding against the door to break the lock. A woman’s voice starts shrieking inside the house, and as the big red door key persists, the shrieking turns to shouting. In a couple of neighbouring houses, lights come on.

When the door slams back, men rush through it, pushing past Sheila Birch who’s wailing in the hallway.

‘What are you doing? What are you doing?’

The men disregard her, taking the stairs two at a time to check the bedrooms, striding into the downstairs rooms. There’s a thundering of feet overhead, and the shifting of the hatch as they check the attic space.

‘Target not found!’

Sheila’s face is red with rage and trauma.

‘What are you *doing*!’ she yells. ‘If you’re looking for Brian, he isn’t here!’

By the time Naylor gets to her, Sheila’s sitting on her chair, dabbing at tears. Naylor offers her a glass of water, but Sheila declines.

‘Where is he, Sheila?’ asks Naylor.

‘Spain. And that’s where I’m going.’

The claim makes sense; she’s decked out for travelling, fully made up despite the early hour, dressed in a bright skirt and jacket which couldn’t be anything but holiday wear. If further proof is needed, there’s a large suitcase and a carry-on bag in the hall.

The commander makes his initial report.

‘We haven’t recovered any electronics yet, no laptops or phones, and there’s not much stuff in the wardrobes either,’ he says. ‘Looks like your man’s done a runner. By the way, there’s a taxi outside says he’s got a booking.’

‘That’s my taxi,’ says Sheila, struggling to stand up. ‘All of you, out. I’ve got a plane to catch.’

‘Tell him he’s not needed,’ Naylor says to the commander.

‘Of course he’s needed,’ Sheila objects. ‘Tell him to hang on, I’m getting my stuff.’

‘Sorry, Sheila, no airport for you today,’ says Naylor. ‘We need you to

tell us where we can find Brian.'

'I've told you, he's in Spain.'

'What's he doing over there?'

'He's told me not to talk to you, so I'm saying nothing more. And if I miss my flight, I'll be wanting compensation, same as for the door, for the damage you've done there. That just wasn't necessary, all that drama. If you'd just knocked and waited, I would have let you in.'

The early morning's taking its toll, and by the time they're back at Ashridge Naylor's dog-tired, running on the sugary fuel provided by the peanut butter Krispy Kreme doughnuts Hagen picked up en route. When she asks him why he chose the peanut butter, he tells her they have valuable protein.

Campbell's pleased to see them because he's expecting a good result. When they tell him Birch has slipped the net, he slams both hands on his desk.

'Goddammit! Did the wife have anything to say?'

'Soon as we put her in the interview room, she went no comment,' Hagen tells him. 'Obviously Birch told her how to play it. Without a reason to hold her we had to let her go, but she's been left in no doubt her holiday's cancelled.'

'Maybe it was less of a holiday and more of a permanent move,' Naylor adds. 'She wouldn't even tell us what she's done with the dog.'

'You wonder what he told her about why we might come to visit,' Campbell says.

'Probably he fed her some line about embezzlement,' suggests Hagen. 'People see that as a nice, respectable crime.'

'We've come away empty-handed all round,' says Naylor. 'And Birch did a first-class job of clearing his tracks. Nothing's left we might get a trace on, not even a recent photograph we might have circulated. So all we can do now is get in touch with Border Control and the airlines, see if we can find out when he left and where he went with a view to extradition, if he can be tracked in Spain. That's an almighty task, given we've no idea where he's been since I spoke to him when he was in Aylesbury. He might have been gone for weeks by now. When you think about how many flights

there are to Spain on a daily basis, and from how many airports, even I would say that's an expensive job.'

'You'd have to include the sea ports too,' says Hagen. 'And we don't even know what car he'd be driving.'

Campbell sighs.

'It's a massive job, I agree,' he says, 'and we can't do it with existing resources. I'll have a word upstairs. But we're not quite empty-handed. Let me cheer you up with some good news, and tell you that we've had a result from digital forensics on the email received via the fake website. They've pulled an address for the computer which sent it. Dallabrida's got the details, but rather improbably it seems to have originated in a library in Wolverhampton.'

THIRTY-ONE

6 September

Bobby Gillard is smiling.

Hagen's not delighted to be back in Wolverhampton, but Naylor's kept his spirits up, persuading him Gillard's the key to Evan's case.

'Here's the thing, Bobby,' says Naylor. She leans forward across the desk, and Gillard slouches further back in his chair. The duty solicitor's sitting beside him, a diminutive woman who looks far too delicate to be spending time with low-lives like him. Naylor's met her kind before. Undoubtedly, she's tougher than she looks. 'Library records show that at the time this email was sent, you were the only person signed in to use the computers, the only person issued with a password. You signed in with that password, so we've got you at the keyboard.'

From her file, she takes out two sheets of paper and slides them across the table, one to Gillard, one to the solicitor. The solicitor reads what's on the sheet. Gillard doesn't even glance at it.

'For the recording,' says Naylor, 'I have handed Mr Gillard and his advocate a copy of an email sent from the email address *info@petersens.org*. The text of the email is as follows. *We have a range of products to suit a variety of tastes. Prices vary according to requirements. Please supply a phone number and a convenient time for us to call and discuss your needs.* Would you like to tell us what products and tastes you're referring to there, Bobby?'

Bobby's foot-tapping becomes faster, but his smile grows.

'No comment,' he says.

'Can I ask,' says the solicitor, running the point of her pen along the sender line of the email, 'whose is this email address? With who was my client corresponding?'

Naylor turns to Hagen, who raises his chin.

'Is that relevant?' he asks.

‘I think you know it is,’ says the solicitor curtly. ‘If this is a private email – and even if it isn’t – I think what we see here is a possible case of entrapment.’

Bobby Gillard grins.

In the canteen, the coffee looks awful. Naylor chooses tea.

Hagen looks dejected, showing no interest in the cherry cake Naylor’s bought him as he over-stirs his grey latte.

‘Don’t worry about it,’ says Naylor. ‘The library computer’s gone to forensics, and I don’t doubt for one second there’s stuff on there Bobby Gillard doesn’t want us to see. When we find it, his feet won’t touch the ground. Go directly to jail, do not pass Go, do not collect two hundred pounds.’

‘I made a rookie error,’ says Hagen. ‘When I got the initial response, I should have ignored it, and sent another from an official account.’

‘And made a possible entrapment official? What difference would that have made? It doesn’t matter, Brad. Admissible or not, it’s flushed Gillard out of the undergrowth. We’ll be able to see where his online travels have taken him, and that’s bound to throw up something new. Really, don’t worry about it.’

‘What if he does a runner, and disappears like Brian Birch?’

‘He hasn’t got the resources, unless he’s had a big win on the horses, and he didn’t look much like a winner to me. The only choice he’s got is to sit at home and wait for the knock on the door.’

Hagen remembers Gillard’s words about the misery of his home life.

‘Maybe it’ll come as a relief to him,’ he says.

In the two weeks since their visit to Wolverhampton, Naylor knows all they’ve done is chase their own tails. The knowledge that Evan Ferrers’s case has stalled again is tough on them all.

‘So you’ve nothing new?’ asks Campbell, at the weekly case review.

‘Apart from Gillard being back inside, no,’ says Naylor. ‘That was a good result.’

‘How have your approaches to the family been taken?’

Naylor shakes her head.

‘No joy at all there,’ she says. ‘Evan’s making progress, but he’s still

not speaking.'

'The Petersen's website's been taken down,' says Hagen. 'Which suggests that if Gillard was one administrator, there's at least one more still out there. We should be going after them.'

'And how will you do that, Bradley?' asks Campbell.

Hagen and Naylor are silent.

'I'm afraid the time has come,' says Campbell. 'Unless and until we receive new information, I want you to keep your main focus on your other cases.'

Somebody Else's Child

THIRTY-TWO

13 October

Jack never meant to fall asleep, but he's had so little rest this past couple of weeks. He lay down next to Dora just to hold her hand for a while, but the comfort of that feeling with the softness of the pillows was a seductive combination. How long has he been asleep? He doesn't know. Probably not long, as the sun's still high, and the shadows in the bedroom look no different to what they did when he lay down.

What's woken him is the shaking of the bed: not just the play of springs as Dora turns on to her back, but a full-on, bone-rattling shaking. Drowsy and disoriented, he looks around for the source, and finds it in Dora herself. Everything about her is trembling; her eyelids are fluttering over the whites of her eyes, her back is rigid and arched and she's drooling mucous liquid from the corner of her mouth.

In panic, Jack runs around the bed, stands over her and tries to hold her down, thinking he can somehow force her out of the fit, shouting her name to snap her out of it. *It can't go on long*, he thinks, but the spasms won't let her go, and he begins to think of stories of people choking on tongues and vomit and of the recovery position. He's seen pictures of it and rolls her on her side, all the while calling her name, praying he can break through the wall of the seizure and bring her back. When he thinks she's in the right position, he takes the pen from her book of word-search puzzles and jams it in her mouth, doing his best to anchor her tongue flat.

This is an emergency, and Jack won't leave her. At the bedroom door, he listens to hear who's downstairs.

'Claire! Claire! Are you there?'

His shouts fall into silence, so he runs to the bedroom window and throws it open. The red roses in Dora's favourite vase are past their best, their petals scattered on the sill. On the bed, Dora is momentarily still, so still Jack fears that she's dead. When she begins to shake again, it's almost a

relief.

‘Claire! Claire!’ His voice sounds loud across the yard, but Claire’s car isn’t there.

Evan appears from the barn and looks up at his grandfather, his face showing his concern.

‘Evan! Evan, your grandma needs an ambulance. Go and ring them, son! Ring 999, and tell them where to come.’

Evan’s still looking up at him, hesitating.

‘Just do it!’ Jack orders in desperation, and Evan runs away round the house and in through the kitchen door.

Upstairs Jack is crying, pressing Dora’s trembling hand to his lips. In the hall where the photo of him and Evan stands near the phone, Evan picks up the receiver and dials 999. When the operator answers, Evan’s voice is clear and loud.

‘We need an ambulance quickly,’ he says. ‘My grandma’s very ill.’

THIRTY-THREE

15 October

‘Where’s Dad? Dad?’ Thinking Jack must be in the bedroom, Matt calls up the stairs but there’s no reply. He puts his head round the lounge door and glances into the dining room. Jack isn’t there.

‘He can’t be outside, surely?’ he asks. ‘It’s pouring out there.’

Evan is sitting at the kitchen table, an empty milk glass and a plate with a few cake crumbs by his elbow, engrossed in a Manga version of *The Count of Monte Cristo* he found at the library.

‘Evan, do you know where Grandpa is? He and I need to get going. The registry office closes at four.’

Evan looks up from his reading and around the kitchen, as if surprised Jack isn’t there. He shrugs, closes his book and leaves the kitchen to go upstairs.

The door to the bedroom Jack shared with Dora for forty-three years is closed. Evan taps on it, and pushes it gently open. The bed is neatly made, but Jack isn’t there. Evan checks the bathroom, but there’s no one there either. He goes back downstairs.

‘No sign?’ asks Matt, and Evan shakes his head. ‘Any idea where he might be?’

In reply, Evan takes a waterproof coat down from the rack and slips on his wellingtons.

Outside, the rain’s what Grandpa calls stair-rods, hammering down from dark clouds where thunder rumbles, bouncing off the yard and running in rivulets down the lane. A muddy puddle has already formed under the gate to the home field. The air smells of lightning’s sulphur and dank earth, and of the yellow leaves fallen from the hawthorn trees decaying in the grass.

His vision hampered by the huge hood on his jacket, Evan makes his way to the field gate, pulls back the latch and slips through the smallest opening he can, checking the gate is properly shut behind him as Grandpa

has taught him. Hearing the click of the latch, a few sheep raise their heads from grazing and gaze at him, indifferent to his presence and to the rain, though most are pressed together in the shelter of the wall.

The field slopes upwards, and it's towards the top end Evan's heading, head down against the rain and the blasts of wind that have carried it in, towards one of the twisted hawthorn trees, and three stones set in the wall to form a stile.

Jack's there, sitting on the second step of the stile in only his shirt-sleeves, facing the view he frequently tells Evan is the best in all England, of the undulating dales and distant farmsteads, of sky that goes on forever. This is the place, he's told Evan, where he asked Grandma to marry him, and this is the place he's chosen to come when his grief is too much to bear.

When Evan reaches him, the view is obscured. The valleys are hidden by mist and rain, and the sky's oppressive with the burgeoning clouds. Jack's face is wet from the rain dripping from his hair, but his eyes are red, and Evan knows some of the wetness is from tears.

He says nothing, but taps Jack's feet so he'll move them along the stile's bottom step and give him a place to sit. Wondering how he can offer comfort, he reaches for his grandfather's hand.

For a while they sit in silence in the rain, Evan watching how shiny the water makes the spots of lichen on the wall, Jack looking into the distance for hope he can't see.

Eventually Jack says, 'I suppose your dad's looking for me,' and Evan nods.

'I'm being silly,' says Jack. 'We have to go and record your grandma's death, make it official. But I have the feeling that until that's done, she might come back. Once they've put it in their book, there's no denying it. Dora Violet Ferrers, née Hodgson, will be no more.'

They sit a few minutes longer, and as Evan feels the truth of this sinking in, he squeezes Jack's hand tighter.

'I expect you'll stay at home, shall you, and look after your mum?' asks Jack, and Evan nods. 'Maybe your dad and I could find something good to eat in town, cheer us all up. How about some eclairs?'

Evan shakes his head. 'Eccles cakes.'

‘Eccles cakes it is.’ With his free hand, Jack wipes the water from his face, and climbs down from the stile. ‘I shall catch my death of cold, being out here underdressed. That’s what your grandma would say, isn’t it?’

Evan doesn’t answer, but as they walk together back across the field, he keeps his grandpa’s hand in his, trying through his fingers to send Jack as much of his own body warmth as he can, anxious Jack shouldn’t catch his death of cold.

The loss of two dear people would be too much to bear.

THIRTY-FOUR

22 October

In the churchyard, the late days of autumn have robbed the trees, stripping the bronze from the horse chestnuts, the gold from the sycamores and beech. In the tower of the ancient stone church a single bell begins to toll, as Dora's coffin is carried between the crooked headstones towards the studded oak door.

The church is full. Every available seat on the polished black pews is occupied, and there are mourners standing under the medieval stained-glass windows with their scenes of saints' blessings and the rising of the dead. Jack, Matt, Claire and Evan take their reserved places at the front and the first hymn begins, the wheezy old organ always a few notes ahead of the congregation.

As the congregation sits, the vicar ascends to the pulpit and talks about Dora, about where she was born, about her sisters and her schooldays, about how all those years ago she and Jack met and fell in love. There's another hymn – 'I Vow to Thee My Country', because Dora loved the tune – and then Matt's called to read his mother's eulogy. He looks handsome and smart in his black suit, and as he walks straight-backed and solemn to the pulpit steps, Jack thinks how proud of him Dora would be.

In the end it's not the vicar's reminiscences which fell Jack's resolve not to make a fool of himself, but the realisation that his Dora's lying there in a box, unable to see or hear her son at her side. He pulls a white handkerchief from the pocket of his jacket.

Matt's hands are trembling, and as he begins to read his speech, his voice is breaking. Somehow the words come out, telling of an idyllic childhood, of help with homework and picnics by the sea and of his gratitude for all the years of diligent care.

Then he speaks of sponge cakes and splendid roses, and the one thing that defined Dora beyond all else.

‘Without any doubt,’ he says, ‘my mother was the kindest woman who ever walked this earth.’

And Jack weeps.

Misery loves company. With Dora gone, the misery is more Jack’s than Evan’s, but Evan’s preference for silence suits Jack’s grief while his presence and need for care prevent Jack from sliding from shock and despair into suicidal depression.

In fact Evan has been a godsend, dealing capably with most of the mundane tasks relating to the farm, prodding Jack into action when he can’t cope by himself to shift bales and sacks of feed. The season’s growing cold, and overnight frosts have already glazed the puddles on the yard, transforming the meadows to silvery white. It won’t be long before the first snowfall, and Christmas will soon be looming, when Jack knows Dora’s loss will be even harder to bear.

Evan’s got a new interest. After meeting Jack’s distant neighbour, Helen Trewitt, he’s been with Claire to visit her hives, and now spends a good part of his evenings reading books on keeping bees. Come spring, Jack’s promised to think about getting a hive to see how Evan gets on.

But spring’s many weeks away. In the long evenings, while Evan reads, Jack sits, sipping whisky until he slips into a doze. When Evan’s bored of reading, he turns on the TV, watching cheerful vintage sitcoms and wildlife documentaries, marvelling at the wonders of the animal kingdom in places he’s no wish ever to go.

THIRTY-FIVE

8 December

‘‘Ere, Rachel!’’ Dallabrida’s left his side of the office where he’s been holding court with a handful of his mates, and he’s heading for the exit via Naylor’s desk. ‘I bet you look good in sequins! What you wearing for this do?’

Naylor doesn’t look away from her monitor, where she’s perusing a list of assaults, trying to make a connection in a trio of rapes. There’s a small tinsel Christmas tree on the counter near the coffee machine and glittery foil decorations have been draped round the walls, but with the kind of crimes the team are investigating, the festive spirit seems both irrelevant and lacking.

‘Haven’t given it a moment’s thought,’ she says, though that isn’t true. On her last day off, she took herself shopping to buy a new dress for the occasion, a clinging red stunner featuring – as it happens – a lot of sequins. It was a momentary aberration, way out of her comfort zone, and she’s thinking about returning it and finding something more decorous. Anyway, she hates the office party – this year, dinner and a DJ at an Italian eatery – and she’s thinking she’ll be leaving as soon as coffee’s served.

‘I’ll be there in me best bib and tucker,’ says Dallabrida. He’s standing close to her and she can smell that Gucci aftershave, a scent she’s beginning to think she rather likes. ‘Play your cards right, I might even buy you a drink. You’re a champagne lady, I bet.’

Naylor looks up at him. It’s true what they say. He does have beautiful eyes.

‘A glass of Chablis will do me,’ she says. ‘And what do you mean, bib and tucker? Sounds like a pair of overalls.’

Dallabrida laughs. ‘Me, in overalls? That’ll be the day! Nah, I’ll be in me tuxedo and cummerbund, the works! You won’t recognise me, girl, I tell you, you won’t know me! So come on, are there going to be sequins, or

what?’

Naylor smiles.

‘If I answer that, it takes away the element of surprise,’ she says, ‘and you know your best friend in this line of work is the element of surprise.’

Dallabrida laughs again.

‘You crack me up, you do. Anyway, I can’t stand round here all day nattering, even if I might like to. Some of us got work to do.’

And with a wave, he’s gone.

Though she doesn’t expect it, he’s rattled her concentration. For some reason she now thinks she should make an effort, maybe get her nails done and book a blow-dry.

She’s taking out her phone to make the call when it rings. Ron Perdue.

‘Hi, Ron,’ she says. ‘How’s tricks?’

‘Not so bad. Me and June were just indulging in that favourite pastime of the idle retired, watching the lunchtime news.’

‘All right for some.’

‘I don’t know why we bother. It’s nothing but misfortune and corrupt politicians lying through their teeth, as always. But there’s just been an item on there I think you should know about. How’s the Ferrers case going?’

Naylor sits up in her chair.

‘Stalled. Why?’

‘Well, I’m ringing you because it’s a long way off your patch, and I think it’ll take a while before anyone makes a connection, if there is one. And it may not be connected, but it struck me there were some distinct similarities and that you could do with jumping on it while it’s red-hot.’

‘What are you talking about, Ron? What’s going on?’

‘Looks like the same MO to me, similar age, a bus stop not far from a school. Better get Googling, Naylor, Middlewich, Cheshire. There’s been another snatch.’

Déjà vu, again. Though it’s still weeks away, on the Ferrerses’ cul-de-sac Christmas appears to be in full swing, with sparkling trees in every window and the house-fronts festooned with LED lights and cheery Santas, waiting to be lit up when dusk falls. Even the Ferrers house seems to be in on the mood, with a wreath of holly and silver ribbon hanging on the door.

Major progress from last year, thinks Naylor. Christmas last year, they were looking at a life of never seeing Evan again.

Hagen knocks at the door, and it's opened promptly by Claire – a different Claire again, still on her way up but definitely getting there: hair nicely cut, better clothes. She smiles uncertainly when she sees them on the doorstep.

'Hello, Mrs Ferrers,' says Hagen. 'I'm sure you remember us, DS Hagen, DI Naylor.'

'Of course,' says Claire. 'Come in.'

Naylor's pleased to see the house looking better, too. There's the smell of winter spices – cinnamon and cloves – from a reed diffuser, and the place looks clean and cared for, like it did the first night they arrived. That seems a long time ago.

Claire offers them coffee, which she and Hagen accept. While the kettle's boiling, Naylor feels the need to apologise.

'I know it's been a while,' she says. 'We've no excuse to offer really, except the trail went cold and we'd nowhere else to go. And with the pressure of other work . . .'

'I understand that,' says Claire, spooning coffee into her smart white mugs. 'Of course I know budgets are tight. But those men who took Evan are dangerous, and they're a risk to everyone until they're caught. Aren't they?'

Hagen looks at his shoes and clears his throat.

'Yes, they are,' he says. 'To be honest, that's why we're here. I don't want to beat about the bush. Another young boy has been snatched.'

Claire freezes with the spoon halfway between cup and coffee jar, her eyes wide with shock.

'You're kidding,' she says. 'Another boy's gone? From Evan's school?'

'Sadly we're very far from kidding,' says Naylor. 'But he's not from this area. There's been an incident in Cheshire. You may have seen it on the news. We've been in touch with Cheshire police and there are some distinct similarities, so we're pretty sure the two cases are related. So we're here to speak to Evan, to see if he can help us help this other boy. I don't need to tell you how desperate his parents are feeling.'

Coffee forgotten, Claire lays the spoon down on the counter. She shakes her head and covers her mouth with her hand.

‘My God, those poor, poor people. This is terrible. How awful. How can it have happened again?’

Naylor and Hagen have no response. With no dedicated resources assigned to Evan’s case and no leads from Bobby Gillard – who has persisted with his *no comment* stance – a repeat of the offence was almost inevitable, though it’s in no one’s interests for them to say so. They need Claire to believe or be persuaded there’s a good chance now of a breakthrough, because without her co-operation, they’ll never gain Evan’s help. And Evan’s help is absolutely essential if the new victim is to be rescued alive.

To that end, Hagen opens the leather folder he’s carrying and brings out a photo, a school-uniform pose of a boy in a blue blazer, dark hair freshly barbered, a grin over slightly crooked teeth giving an air of character and cheekiness.

‘This is him,’ says Hagen, and Claire’s eyes fill with tears. ‘Liam Keslake, aged eleven.’

‘Just like Evan,’ breathes Claire. ‘He looks so young.’

‘Just like Evan. On his own at a bus stop, there one moment, vanished the next.’

‘The thing is, Claire,’ says Naylor, ‘we’re really hoping this may be enough to persuade Evan to talk to us, to give us that statement. It’s been several months. How’s he been doing?’

‘Better,’ says Claire. ‘He’s been doing better, but he’s not right, he’s not normal. He acts like a boy half his age. He lives in his own world, and he’s content there, finding his way. If you go making him remember, how can it not set him back?’

Claire’s right, of course, and Hagen and Naylor know it.

‘We have people who are specially trained,’ says Hagen. ‘They tread very carefully. They’d take it at a pace comfortable for him.’

‘I don’t believe you,’ says Claire. ‘You need information, and you need it as quickly as possible. If that means riding roughshod over Evan, I think that’s what you’ll do.’

‘Don’t you think Evan will want to help, when he knows what’s happened?’

Claire shrugs.

‘You’d have to ask him that.’

‘Can we speak to him?’

‘He isn’t here.’

This is a blow Naylor and Hagen aren’t expecting.

‘Where is he?’ asks Hagen.

‘He’s staying with his grandfather, up in Yorkshire. He feels safe up there, and he’s company for my father-in-law. My mother-in-law died recently, and my father-in-law’s taken it hard. They suit each other pretty well, two damaged souls, shut away from the world. I’ve been up there a fair bit myself, so you’re lucky to find me here, to be honest. I come back for Matt’s sake. It’s hardly fair on him, is it, always coming home to an empty house? But to be frank I really wouldn’t be happy about you intruding on Evan, and I don’t think Matt would be either.’

‘Claire, I understand one hundred percent where you’re coming from,’ says Naylor. ‘And we can’t force you to do anything, we can’t force Evan to help. But we would really appreciate it if you’d talk it over with Matt, see what he thinks, and maybe talk to Evan. For Liam’s sake, for his family’s sake. You could be key in getting to him before too much damage is done.’

‘The damage is already done by now, though, isn’t it?’ says Claire. ‘Now it’s degrees of damage he might never come back from. Like Evan.’

Naylor is on the point of telling the whole truth, of telling Claire something she hasn’t said before. Too much experience in cases of this kind suggests that when Evan was found, chances are he was hours away from a shallow grave, lost forever on wasteland or bleak moorland. The problem paedophile rings have with their victims is perpetual: children grow older and grow up, and no longer suit their abusers’ tastes.

But Claire’s been through enough, and if she hasn’t thought of it herself, she doesn’t need to know.

‘Please, Claire,’ says Naylor, and she places a contact card on the counter. ‘Please talk to Matt, talk to Evan, and ring me. The sooner the better, if you don’t mind.’

Back in the car, Hagen throws the folder on the back seat and starts the engine.

‘That could have gone better,’ he says.

‘You think so? It could have been a lot worse. She might have slammed the door in our faces, and I’d have understood that. We haven’t exactly been heroes in this case.’

‘Not so far.’ Hagen pulls away from the kerb. ‘But this is a long way from over. This is another chance, another bite at the cherry.’

‘We all need to stay positive, but I don’t think that’s how the Keslakes would look at it, Brad,’ says Naylor, and Hagen has to agree she’s right.

When the phone rings, Evan is on the sofa eating his fish fingers, watching a nature programme about grizzly bears in Yellowstone National Park. Jack is in the kitchen, dumping the uneaten remains of his own meal in the bin. He’s ready for a whisky, but won’t allow himself to open the bottle before the clock shows 7 p.m.

It’s cold at the foot of the stairs. Maybe the whole house is colder than it should be. His and Dora’s battle over the central heating thermostat was a running gag between them, her turning it up, him grumblingly turning it down. The place feels chilled, and before he takes the call, he turns it up a few degrees and blows a kiss for her into the air.

‘Dad? It’s me.’

Jack’s pleased to hear Matt’s voice. Matt will indulge him in his grief, giving him a chance to reminisce, to talk about Dora, which if the truth be known, in his hurting heart of hearts is, at the moment, all he wants to do.

‘How are you doing, Dad?’

‘Oh, I’m all right,’ says Jack, and as he says the words, tears prick his eyes. ‘Soldiering on. What else can you do? I was going through a few things this afternoon, having a bit of a clear-out, but I didn’t get very far. Everything I thought I should throw out, I ended up putting back in its place. Just like your mother would have done.’

‘It’s early days,’ says Matt. ‘Don’t go worrying about that yet. You and I can do a bit when we come up for Christmas.’

At the prospect of Christmas, Jack sighs.

‘She didn’t make it, did she, bless her. It’ll be a strange do without her.’

‘Yes, it will. But for Evan’s sake . . .’

‘Oh, yes, for Evan’s sake,’ says Jack. ‘I expect he’ll want a tree.’

‘We’ll bring a tree. We’ll bring turkey, pudding, the lot. All you have to do is sit and drink your Glenfiddich and wear a party hat. You can do that, Dad, for Mum’s sake. Listen, can Evan hear what you’re saying?’

‘He’s watching telly. I’m out in the hall.’

‘Have you seen the news today?’

‘We don’t watch the news. You know that.’

‘Well, first of all please make sure you don’t, not in front of Evan. Something’s happened. We’ve had the police round. They came to see Claire this afternoon.’

‘Have they got the bastards?’

‘I only wish they had. Actually, it’s the opposite. Another boy’s been taken.’ Jack takes a deep breath and decides to sit down. ‘Are you there, Dad?’

‘I’m here. That’s very bad news.’

‘They think it’s the same gang or ring or whatever they call themselves. The same ones who took Evan.’

‘God help him. How old?’

‘Eleven.’

Jack shakes his head.

‘And does this unfortunate young man have a name?’

‘Liam.’

‘If I ever get near them, they’ll wish they’d never been born.’

‘The thing is, Dad, the police want to talk to Evan. Hardly surprising, really. They want to see if he knows anything that can help them. He must know something, after all. He might know plenty, if only he’d talk.’

‘He says enough, these days,’ says Jack, ‘enough to get by. There’s too much chatter in the world anyway, if you ask me.’

‘Claire and I talked, and we think we should try and help, as one family to another. If there’d been anything anyone could have done to help us, we’d have been desperate for them to do it. We just think it wouldn’t be fair to say no, for Liam’s sake. For his parents’ and grandparents’ sake. What do you think?’

Jack considers, and as he's thinking, he believes he hears a footfall on the stairs, on the second step from the top which always creaks. He turns and looks up to the landing. No one is there.

But it makes him think of Dora and what she would say. She'd try and help, without the slightest hesitation.

'If you agree then I'll agree, but it isn't down to us, is it? It's up to Evan.'

'We think you could persuade him. We think he'll listen to you.'

'And if he says yes? Have we got to come hiking down there? I don't believe I'm up to driving all that way, not the way I've been feeling. My ticker hasn't been good. The doctor's given me some new pills.'

'They'd come up there, Dad. And either me or Claire would come too. You won't have to drive anywhere.'

Jack sighs.

'All right, I'll do my best. As long as I'm not to blame if he refuses.'

'No one's to blame for anything,' says Matt, 'except those bastards. Look on the bright side, we might see them in court yet.'

'We should see them swinging from the highest branches of the tallest tree in the land,' says Jack, 'but of course that'll never happen.'

'Never say never,' says Matt, and he laughs a laugh with little mirth. 'Will you let us know how it goes?'

'Aye, I'll keep you posted.'

Jack hangs up the phone and glances at his watch. Close on seven. A decision must be made: Glenfiddich first, or talk to Evan. The Glenfiddich should be deferred. The music on the closing credits of the nature programme is just beginning and now would be a good time, before Evan's absorbed in something else. Once Evan has focused on something these days, it can be difficult to snap him out of it. When he enters the world of grizzly bears or whales or dolphins, he seems to join the creatures there, and slip away.

He considers the thermostat and decides to leave the heating turned up till bedtime. As he heads for the lounge, he feels that strange fluttering in his heart, a palpitation his new tablets are supposed to have stopped. He stands still, waiting for it to pass, but the fluttering continues and tickles his

throat, making him cough. A minute goes by, and the palpitation passes, but just when he thinks it's settled down, there's a stabbing pain in his chest which takes his breath away. It hurts, but only briefly, there and gone in a flash so he can tell himself it was nothing. Did he take his pills at lunchtime? Maybe he forgot. He should be using that special box of Dora's with the compartments for a week's worth of pills, Monday through Sunday, morning, noon and night, if he could only find the motivation to sort it out.

He's so tired. As he enters the lounge, Evan shifts some of his bee books out of the way, and pats the sofa next to him for Jack to come and join him rather than sitting in his big armchair. Jack's glad to sit down, and decides he'll do the smart thing – the thing Dora would tell him to do – and skip the whisky tonight. Evan's offering him the TV remote, asking him to choose something to watch, but when Jack takes it, he switches off the set.

'I've got a better idea than telly,' he says. 'First of all, you and I have to have a bit of a chat. And after that, I think it's time we had a re-match at draughts. I seem to remember last time we played, you won, and I want a chance to reclaim my laurels. What do you say?'

Evan smiles, nods, and is going to jump up from the sofa to fetch the draught board. Jack touches his arm to stop him.

'Not so fast, ace,' he says. 'That was your dad on the phone. I'm going to tell you something now which might upset you, but much as we might not like it, sometimes upsetting things come knocking at the door. Like losing your grandma. We'd have done anything to stop that but there wasn't anything to be done. What's happened, happened, and we have to do our best and get on. Like the business when you were gone from us.'

He feels Evan stiffen, his muscles tense, and knows he might be about to run from the room.

'You must listen to me, son. There's something we have to talk about and it can't wait until we're entirely ready to face it because the world doesn't work like that. It's here and it's urgent, not for us – if it were down to me it would never be mentioned, ever, you know that – but because someone else is involved now and I think we should try and help them. But before we talk about what your dad said, you and I are going to set some

ground rules, because the world might be coming looking for us but that doesn't mean to say it has to come here. This place is a special place, wouldn't you say, and I see no reason why we should let anyone in who we don't love or like or want here. Only nice people are welcome. And I'm not saying the police aren't nice people, but they deal with bad people, and we don't want anyone here either who's got any connection to anyone bad. So you and I can agree where our boundaries are. And I say, we make the stream at the bottom of the lane there our frontier. No one we don't want here crosses that. Everywhere this side of that line – this house and the barn and our fields – is sanctuary. Do you know what I mean by sanctuary?'

Evan shakes his head.

'It means a place where you can't be touched, somewhere protected by an invisible shield. This is our land. One day I hope it'll be your dad's and yours to look after, the same as my dad – your great-grandad – looked after it before me. So picture it with a great, high imaginary wall down by the stream, and that's how it's going to be. OK?'

Evan nods uncertainly.

'The thing is, son, those men who took you, they've taken someone else. A boy called Liam.'

Instantly, Evan curls into the smallest ball he can make. With both hands, he covers his face, then covers his ears instead and squeezes his eyes shut.

'Evan, you must listen to me. The police need your help to find him. You know things that could help him, could bring him home much faster than . . .' He thinks of Dora's words when Evan was found, her dismay at their negligence in not spending all their time between his leaving and returning in searching for him, in not dedicating themselves to that quest. Ever since she said that, Jack has felt the same. Why did they do nothing? Why did they rely on the authorities? 'Well, faster than you came back to us.'

Evan is crying, and Jack finds it hard to bear. He pulls Evan's hands from his ears, and hugs him close.

'I know, I know. Sssh now, ssh. There's another thing about this place of ours I forgot to say, and that is that it breeds Ferrers men who are brave as

lions. When something has to be faced, we tackle it square on. Don't we, old man? Don't we? If I could do this for you, you know I would, and your dad and your mum and your grandma would have done too, but only you can do this. What they need to know is locked away in your funny old brain-box.' He taps Evan on the head. 'It's all locked away in there, and it's time for some of it to come out. They'll be nice people who'll want to talk to you, but they won't be coming here. They'll have a special place where you'll go, a safe place, and I wouldn't doubt for one second they'll be supplying all the chocolate digestives you can eat. But we have to think of that boy Liam. If we don't try and help him and help his mum and dad get him home safe, then are we good people? I think if we don't help him, we might come one day to regret it. Do you want some time to think about it?'

Tucked away under his grandpa's arm, Evan nods.

'All right then. You be having a little think and you let me know what you decide. Now, are you ready to take on your mighty grandpa at that game?'

Evan shakes his head.

'We'll save that for another time then, shall we? Is there something good to watch on the old goggle-box?'

Evan doesn't move, so Jack takes the controller and finds an episode of *Dad's Army* they've watched a couple of times before, vintage humour from an era Jack remembers well but which seems distant and out of reach, as remote in time as the dated clothes and set furnishings and even the characters. *Do people like that still exist? Did they ever? Was it a more innocent time, really?* he wonders. *Weren't the same horrors out there that are out there now?*

Evan isn't really watching; Jack can tell because he isn't laughing at the gags. Twenty minutes later, Evan reaches for the controller and mutes the sound.

There's silence between them. Then Evan says, 'I will help Liam.'

Briefly Jack closes his eyes, picturing all the drama to come, more disturbance in an already too-disturbed young life.

'That's my boy,' he says. 'My brave boy. You're doing the right thing.'

Evan says nothing else but stands and leaves him, and Jack hears him

padding up the stairs in his Star Wars socks, and the creaking as he reaches the second step from the top.

That night, in the small hours, Jack hears Evan shout, in the torment of his first nightmare in several weeks. Maybe they should leave him be, let him put it all behind him. But there's another boy out there, another Evan, and how could they live with themselves if they did nothing to help?

In the panic of his dream, Evan shouts again. Jack climbs from his bed and puts on his dressing gown and slippers. Opening Evan's door as quietly as he can, he finds *Biggles Delivers the Goods* on the nightstand and, by the light seeping in from the landing, begins to read.

THIRTY-SIX

10 December

From the third floor, the view from Campbell's office window is of a typical British December: wet roads in cold rain, sky a persistent, drab grey, bright, twinkling lights forcing a mood of manic festivity and panic shopping. Campbell's got all his official Christmas cards arranged on his desk, tasteful snowy scenes with generic greetings from various organisations – the Prison Officers' Association, branches of the Courts and Tribunals Service, Victim Support – and scrawled signatures with no messages. As far as Naylor can see, there isn't a personal card among them.

Campbell must be expecting a long meeting, since he's asked her and Hagen to sit down, but Naylor sees no reason it shouldn't be quick. Campbell's got a short 'to do' list by his left arm. Naylor can't read his handwriting upside down, but the items he's completed have been crossed out using a ruler.

Campbell sits back in his chair.

'So, give me some good news.'

'Liam's abduction has prompted the Ferrers family to encourage Evan to talk to us,' says Naylor. 'Of course we're hoping something will come out of that.'

'I hope so too,' says Campbell. 'How are you going to proceed?'

'We've requested a room at Harrogate station as being the nearest place to where Evan's staying with viable facilities. We might have interviewed him at home but he doesn't want that. We're thinking Rose should go with me rather than relying on North Yorks to provide someone. Women only, of course, and Evan's met me and Rose before. The fewer new faces he sees, the better.'

'Sounds good,' says Campbell. 'When will you meet?'

'We're planning to travel up this afternoon, just as soon as Rose can confirm childcare arrangements, with a view to seeing Evan tomorrow

morning, as early as we can. Obviously Cheshire are pushing us to get on with it but it's not an easy situation. As we understand it, Evan's still very fragile. If we go too fast, he might clam up on us again.'

'Rose knows what she's doing,' says Campbell.

'With respect, Sir, she didn't get far last time,' says Hagen. 'I think we need to stay mindful that Evan's been highly traumatised and he may never open up, or not before we're collecting our pensions, anyway. Maybe you could advise Cheshire that we're doubtful of a result through this interview and suggest they pursue every other avenue they've got as aggressively as possible.'

'I'm sure they're already doing that. But we can hardly blame them for keeping their fingers crossed, can we?'

'As long as there's no reliance,' says Hagen. 'That's all I'm saying. The other thing to bear in mind is that the family's not exactly overwhelmed with what we did for them. Evan was only recovered by a happy accident, so I can't say I blame them. If he reacts badly, I can see them pulling the plug. We've had no resources on this case for months. Now it's all hands to the pumps again. It just feels like we're fire-fighting all the time, instead of taking a methodical approach which might have got a result.'

'I'll be sure to pass your comments on to the Chief Constable, Bradley,' says Campbell, 'but you're not saying anything I don't already know. Just do your best. And let's hope Rose and Rachel come back from Yorkshire with something we can use.'

'Is that your strategy for a fast-track promotion?' Naylor asks Hagen as they walk down the stairs. 'Telling him he's mishandling our caseload?'

'It wants saying,' says Hagen. 'How can we work like this, dropping investigations and picking them up again at a moment's notice? We need to be methodical, organised. If he'd left us on the case, we might have had a result by now and Liam Keslake might never have been taken.'

'And all those cases we've looked at in the interim would still be waiting to be assigned,' says Naylor. 'I get what you're saying, of course I do. We'll just have to make sure we use this breakthrough to nail these bastards, for all our sakes.'

THIRTY-SEVEN

11 December

Rose guides Evan into a room in the Vulnerable Witness Suite where Naylor is already waiting. The room's without windows, but it's pleasant and warm, with plush, comfortable chairs and a coffee table, and soft pink walls. There's a picture of purple heather in bloom on open moorlands and a TV on a stand with video recording equipment, but there's no intention to video anything today. The sound recording equipment is unobtrusive, and there are biscuits on the table – though no chocolate digestives – along with a can of Coke and bottled water. Naylor has brought in coffee for her and Rose. The room smells of it as Evan enters.

The three chairs are arranged with equal spacing round the table: no obvious divide.

'Come in, Evan,' Rose is saying. 'Have a seat, sweetheart.'

Naylor doesn't stand up, but turns in her chair and smiles. Evan looks much better than when she last saw him – he's put on weight and grown a little, and the anaemic pallor she remembers in his face has become a healthy pinkness, probably due in part to his embarrassment in this situation. He's better dressed too, in clothes that fit, and yet there's still something unnatural about him. Naylor knows he's twelve, but if you saw him in the street you'd take him for an oversized nine- or ten-year-old. Most kids his age want to dress older, growing up too fast. Evan seems the opposite, wearing clothes which are too young. And there's something else: he doesn't have a phone. What kid these days isn't always on a phone? But Evan's hands are empty.

'Hi, Evan,' she says. 'It's nice to see you again.'

Evan doesn't reply, but sits down next to her, Rose taking the third chair.

'You remember Rachel, I expect,' she says. 'She was with us when we spoke a few months ago.'

Very briefly, Evan looks at Naylor, before his eyes return to a spot on the floor.

‘I want to start by saying thank you for coming to meet us,’ says Rose. ‘I think you’re already aware of the reason we want to talk to you, but before we get to that I just want to emphasise that you’re free to go at any time. Your mum’s waiting downstairs, ready to whisk you away as soon as we’re finished. But we’re hoping you’ll stay with us for a little while at least.’

There’s no reaction from Evan, except that his foot is tapping rapidly on the floor. He looks so keyed up, so uptight, Naylor won’t be surprised if he makes a run for the door. Somehow they have to secure him in place, get him settled down.

She lifts the cover of the file that’s on the table. Rose won’t approve of what she’s about to do, but she hopes she’ll understand the rationale behind it.

She slides a copy of Liam Keslake’s photo under Evan’s nose. Evan glances at it, then whips his head away, as if taking a sudden interest in the picture of moorland heather. But Naylor sees his eyes come back to it. Then they’re back on the floor.

‘When those men took you, Evan,’ says Naylor quietly, ‘one of the first things we did to try and find you was to put your picture everywhere we could. Newspapers, TV, magazines, everywhere we could think of. Thousands and thousands of people saw your picture, so if they got even a glimpse of you, they’d call us. This picture is of Liam, and I’m very sorry to say we believe he’s in the same place you were, not very long ago. That’s why we’re asking you again to talk to us about that place, difficult though we know it is for you to remember. Because you can do a good thing by talking to us, Evan. You might be the key to finding Liam, and to finding the men who hurt you, and if we can find them, we can punish them, and put them in jail for a very, very long time.’

She waits, and Rose waits with her. Evan doesn’t speak.

‘Please, Evan,’ says Rose. ‘Please help us. Please help Liam.’

The silence goes on, and on. Naylor is about to shake her head and signal to Rose that they should give up.

But then Evan speaks.

‘I want to help Liam,’ he says. ‘But I can’t.’

Rose meets Naylor’s eyes, signalling her to keep quiet.

‘Why do you say that, Evan?’ she asks.

‘Because if I tell you anything, my mum will know and my dad will know. They’ll know what happened. And my grandpa.’

Tears are running down Evan’s face. Rose passes him a box of tissues.

‘Is that what’s worrying you, Evan, your mum and dad knowing?’

Evan nods. ‘Mostly.’

‘Is that why you’ve been so quiet?’

He nods again.

There’s a lump in Naylor’s throat, stemming from her pity and compassion for this boy in his embarrassment, and she tries to imagine how she’d have felt at his age, with the threat of revelation of the details of the abuse hanging over her.

‘You were afraid if you spoke to them, they’d ask you about it?’

He nods.

‘Oh, sweetheart.’ Naylor can tell that, like her, Rose is aching to put her arm round Evan, but distance must be maintained.

‘That won’t happen,’ she says. ‘We give you our word that nothing you say to us – nothing, not one word – will be discussed with your mum, or your dad, or your grandpa or anyone else who knows you. You won’t have to show your face in court and you won’t set eyes on those men. And when we catch them, I’ll make sure your mum and dad come nowhere near the court while your case is being heard. They’ll know nothing you don’t choose to tell them, and if you choose for them to know absolutely nothing, then that’s how it’ll be. You’ll be anonymous to everyone except us and the judge. How does that sound?’

Evan blows his nose.

‘Could you agree to work like that, Evan?’ Rose persists. ‘I’m sure your mum and dad will understand. I’ve got kids and I know if any of them felt like you do, I would absolutely respect their wishes. Any mum and dad would. So if we talk to your mum and get her agreement, will you talk to us then?’

Evan looks at her and nods his head. *Yes.*

‘I’ll go and have a word with her,’ says Naylor.

Claire is sitting on a hard, lime-green sofa facing a window with a view of leafless trees and melancholy sky, asking herself how their lives ever came to this. The feelings she has – of unwanted disconnection, of loss of control, of fearfulness, of deep, aching love – she’s experienced before, though at a much lower pitch. She cried on Evan’s first day of kindergarten, and again when he had his first sleepover, on his first trip to scout camp and when he started his last school, which in relative terms was only a short while ago, but as things have turned out, was in another life. What came after that, while he was really gone, was wholly different. That was wailing, primal grief, which put anything she’s feeling today into telescopic perspective. What is it they ask in hospitals? The pain scale, one to ten. Today she’d give an eight or nine. The grief while he was gone, in the low twenties.

Now here they are, Evan’s first day in the Vulnerable Witness Suite. She’s fighting the instinct to run to that room, to barge in and grab her son’s hand and haul him out of there, and tell those women with him to send apologies to the Keslakes but they must get through it as best they can, as she and Matt did. Evan’s been through enough, God knows. He doesn’t deserve to be reliving it.

He might say that for himself. He might still refuse them. But just as she’s hoping that’s what he’ll do, the swing doors to the reception area where she’s waiting open, and Naylor’s walking towards her.

Evan’s only been in there ten minutes. He must be refusing to speak.

Naylor gives her a smile that’s a long way from her usual efficient, put-you-at-ease, I’m-in-charge professional greeting. This smile is diffident, uncertain, the same smile of empathic sympathy undertakers wear. She sits down next to Claire, slanting herself towards her, and in an unprecedented move, gives Claire’s hand a squeeze.

‘Are you OK?’ she asks.

‘Not really,’ says Claire.

‘There’s good news,’ says Naylor, and Claire thinks what’s good news for Naylor is probably bad news for her, and she’s right. ‘He will talk to us,

but only on condition . . . I'm sorry, Claire.'

'On what condition?'

'Only on condition that you and Matt stay well away from all this. He's told us why he hasn't been speaking.'

Claire has never asked herself why Evan stopped speaking. She's assumed it was down to some manifestation of shock, an understandable reaction to a horrific situation, like in the French Revolution when Marie Antoinette's hair turned white before they chopped off her head.

'This may be hard to hear,' Naylor goes on, 'but he thought the only way to stop you asking about what he went through was to keep silent. He's desperately, deeply ashamed about the abuse. It's not an uncommon reaction. But he doesn't want you to know what happened to him.'

Claire bursts into tears.

As she scrabbles in her handbag for tissues, Naylor puts a hand on her shoulder.

'I'm sorry, Claire. I'm so sorry to put you all through this. But if we're to have a chance of catching these men, this may be the only way.'

Claire dabs her eyes and blows her nose.

'What's he said, exactly?'

'He wants to know that you won't get to hear anything he has to say. That means you staying away from the trial – assuming we get that far – and not asking him anything about our meetings with him.'

'He wants to exclude us.'

'He wants to protect you, and himself. He's afraid if you get to know what he's been made to do, you'll love him less.'

Claire begins to cry again.

'That's not possible. Please tell him that's not possible.'

'I will,' says Naylor. 'And I have to say, I think his approach is the right one. Trust me. Some things it really is better not to know. What he wants from you is acceptance of his need to keep this private, between him and us.'

Claire wipes her eyes again.

'I don't know what Matt will say. All he talks about is our day in court. He wants to know who did it. He wants to kill them.'

‘Better he’s not there, then. But I have to ask you to trust us to guide Evan through this process, to take a step back. To just be his mum and dad and leave the crime and punishment to us. Can I tell him you’ll do that? I know how hard it is, Claire. I really do.’

‘Is that what he wants?’

‘It’s what he needs.’

‘There’s no choice, then, is there? OK.’

Naylor pats Claire’s shoulder.

‘Thank you. So on that basis, we’re going to talk to him now. Probably not too long. We’ll be taking it at his pace, and if he becomes at all distressed, we’ll stop. Why don’t you go and find yourself a cup of coffee in the cafeteria, and plan to be back here in an hour or so? The latte’s not bad if that’s your thing. I’ve got your mobile. If we need anything, I’ll give you a call.’

When Naylor leaves her, Claire visits the sanitised toilets and splashes cold water on her face. She doesn’t want Evan to know she’s been crying, but with a lipstick top-up and a line of eye pencil she doesn’t look bad. No one interrupts her while she’s in there, so she thinks it would be a good place to have a private conversation with Matt.

When he picks up, she can hear noise in the background, the hiss of a coffee machine, a cashier’s voice asking for money.

‘It’s me,’ she says. ‘Can you talk?’

‘I’m in Costa. I’ve been thinking about you both. How’s it going?’

She gives him a précis of her conversation with Naylor. When she stops talking, Matt doesn’t speak.

‘What do you think?’ she presses him.

‘I get it,’ he says, and then with the phone held away from his mouth, he says *Thank you* to the barista. ‘I get what he wants and I get why, but we’ll be so in the dark.’

In the dark.

As soon as the words are said, they resonate with them both, how appropriate they are for the place their son has been.

‘Maybe they’re right,’ says Claire. ‘We’re not the people to bring him back. They know what they’re doing, and we’ve just been floundering.’

‘I don’t know about that.’ She hears him take a gulp of his coffee. ‘I think he’s doing OK, considering where he’s been.’

‘I worry this will set him back, making him relive it.’

‘Or maybe it’ll help him come to terms with it. A bit of therapy. And anyway, if he gets set back, we’ll just bring him forward again.’

‘I wish you were here.’

‘So do I,’ says Matt. ‘Will you ring me later, let me know how he is?’

‘Of course.’

‘We can do this, you know. We got him back, and that’s all that matters.’

A few short months ago, Claire would have questioned that. Now, she thinks he’s right.

‘I’d better go,’ she says. ‘I’ll talk to you later.’

‘Love you,’ says Matt.

Jack’s taken advantage of Evan’s rare absence to pay a visit to Helen Trewitt, his bee-keeping neighbour. He takes the Freelanders to the bottom of the Trewitts’ lane, but finding the gate closed, he parks up on the rough ground, and sets off to walk up to the house. The day is bright, biting cold, and Jack feels every breath of frigid air deep in his lungs. A third of the way up the track, he stops to rest, telling himself it’s to get a look at Andrew Trewitt’s Blackface ram. A few paces further on, he feels the need to stop again, fighting against a rising feeling of nausea. The track’s somehow grown in length since he was last here – how is that possible? – but only months ago he ran up here like a young man. By the time he reaches the farmyard, he’s feeling very unwell, fighting for breath and his heart-rate unsteady.

Pulling himself together as best he can, he knocks at the farmhouse door.

‘Jack! Come in!’ Helen’s always welcoming, but she takes one look at Jack and makes him sit down.

‘Are you all right?’ she asks. ‘I’ll make a cup of tea.’

‘A glass of water,’ says Jack, hunting in his pockets for his tablets and inhaler, but he’s left them in the glove-box of the Freelanders.

‘Tea’s good for everything,’ says Helen, and she finds fruitcake to up

Jack's blood sugar. 'I don't know why you didn't drive up. At our age, who wants to be slogging up that track? How are you anyway, Jack? How are you getting on?'

'I miss her,' he says, repressing the pricking tears, as he seems to do constantly these days. 'It isn't easy, not easy at all. But I'm soldiering on, for Evan's sake.'

'He's a worthwhile project, that boy.' Helen pours tea and cuts the fruitcake. A cat lying on the windowsill above the Aga gets up from its blanket, turns round and settles back to sleep. 'He's a credit to you, Jack, he really is.'

Jack tells her about the police intervention and how he fears a backward step.

'I wouldn't be too worried,' says Helen. 'It had to come sometime. They were always going to need some kind of statement, and it might do him good to actually talk about it. It's not good to keep things bottled up.'

Jack doesn't agree, though he doesn't say so. He has no wish to know what Evan went through.

'Anyway, we're thinking about Christmas now,' he says, 'and I've been wondering what to get the lad. Thanks to you he's very taken with the idea of bees, so I thought I might get him one of those outfits, you know, the white overalls and the mask.'

Helen laughs.

'A bee-suit. That's a very good idea.'

'It is if you'd agree to tutor him a bit before we get a hive. Bees are well outside my remit. Would you take him under your wing, Helen, show him the ropes?'

'It'd be my pleasure,' says Helen.

'And where would I get one of these bee-suits? I don't suppose you've one to fit him?'

'Fraid not. But you could get one off the internet.'

Jack waves a dismissive hand.

'We don't have anything to do with technology at our house. Dora and I, we're . . . At least, I'm too old a dog to learn that new trick. I could ask Matt, I suppose.'

‘Would you like me to get one for you?’

Jack smiles.

‘Mrs Trewitt, you’re a godsend. If you wouldn’t mind, that would be champion. I’ll leave you some cash to pay for it.’

Helen laughs.

‘Pay me when it arrives. And would you like me to wrap it for you?’

Jack smiles again.

‘You read my mind. Dora always did all the wrapping and labelling. To be honest, I wouldn’t know where to start.’

‘You’re an old dinosaur, the same as Andrew,’ says Helen. ‘He can lamb two hundred ewes, but reckons he couldn’t wrap a box of chocolates.’

‘It’s the male temperament.’

‘It’s laziness. But under the circumstances, you deserve a break. I’ll give you a ring when it arrives.’

Jack finds the going easier on the way back down, but still takes it steady. In this direction, the view’s spread before him, familiar yet unique in its changeability. Isn’t that what Dora used to say, never the same view twice? And it’s true: the light, the colours, the sky mean that though there are constants in the land and its features – the walls, the valleys, the trackways – everything else is always changing, an eternal dance of infinite variety.

Close to the gate, he looks across the valley towards the gritstone edge at Ainsclough Top. It’s a bleak spot from here, a castle on its hill, a bastion as he described it to Evan, and he wonders about him and how he’s getting on. Then he thinks how empty the house will feel when he arrives back there, how there’ll be no one in the kitchen to make him a cup of tea or hear how he got on with Helen.

Maybe he shouldn’t go home quite yet. Maybe he should drive into town and buy a paper. Maybe he’ll find something for Evan there, a little treat to welcome him back. So, climbing into the car, he turns it round, but instead of heading up his own lane, he stays on the road, leaving Ainsclough Top to its own brooding isolation.

The lanes are dark and slushy with the remains of winter’s first snow, which melts on contact with the roadside puddles and is too wet to make an

impact on the tarmac. Claire wonders if Evan's sleeping, but he's still and quiet much of the time these days, and stillness and silence are indicators of nothing.

The headlamps light familiar landmarks. A stand of trees too large to be a copse but not quite big enough to be a wood – which Evan knows is a perfect place to look for owls – looms up out of the dusk, just before the lopsided milestone Jack says has been there three hundred years, its guidance – *Harrogate 27 miles* – barely readable for its covering of moss.

Beyond the milestone, Claire makes the turn across the stream, on to the track up to the house, and Evan stirs, sits up and looks about him, as if he feels it's safe to come back to life.

Jack's been dozing on the sofa, and the fire's burned low. Rousing himself when he sees the headlights on the wall and hears the crunch of stones under tyres, he crosses to the hearth, chooses a couple of good-sized logs and drops them on the embers. The dry bark pops and crackles, and smoke begins to rise. He closes the curtains and, making his way into the kitchen, turns on the light.

'We brought fish and chips, Grandpa!'

Evan's laying the paper-wrapped parcel on the table, and heading to the cupboard for plates.

Jack smiles.

'Did you now? And what kind of fish have you brought for yourself? Not those sausagey ones, I hope?'

'Mum said I could have three.'

'Well, your mother's madly irresponsible.'

He resists the strong urge to ask about how the day's gone or make any reference to it at all, except for a slight raising of the eyebrows in Claire's direction. She signals with a slight nod of the head, *OK*, but she's marvelling at Evan, at how now he's home – for this surely is his home, now – he's a different child to the one he is in the outside world.

Evan's loading up the plates, pouring mushy peas on to his own.

'I'm watching you,' says Jack. 'Don't you be snaffling my chips!'

They eat at the kitchen table, Evan dousing his food in vinegar and dipping his chips in ketchup.

‘You never used to like vinegar,’ says Claire.

‘It’s Grandpa’s fault,’ says Evan. ‘He puts vinegar on everything.’

‘Apple cider vinegar’s very good for you,’ says Jack. ‘And very good for livestock too, as I’ve shown you.’

‘Is Sarson’s made from apples, then?’ asks Claire. ‘I didn’t know that.’

‘Not Sarson’s, no,’ Jack admits. ‘Sarson’s is made of stronger stuff, to put hairs on your chest.’

‘I don’t think Mum wants hairs on her chest,’ says Evan.

‘I really don’t,’ Claire agrees.

Jack winks at Evan, and adds a dash more vinegar to his plate.

‘I went shopping this afternoon,’ he says. ‘I bought you a present.’

Evan’s eyes light up.

‘What is it?’

‘When you’ve finished your tea, you can go in the parlour and have a look.’

But Evan won’t wait; he jumps down from the table and runs to the lounge.

In front of the window there’s a Christmas tree, of modest size, but scenting the room with pine, and on the floor in front of it, a box of decorations, another of lights.

Jack and Claire hear him yelp his delight.

‘It’s just a few baubles,’ says Jack. ‘I didn’t feel inclined to be blundering about in the loft. Dora’s got quite a collection up there, as you know, but I thought we’d leave those till next year.’ Claire feels for him, respecting the rawness of his grief, the difficulties of the approaching season, and she’s relieved he hasn’t taken himself up into the attic with no one to help. ‘I’m afraid we’ll be busy this evening. I’m sorry, Claire. You must be tired.’

‘I really don’t mind,’ she says. ‘A little weariness I can cope with. But you look tired yourself. Are you all right?’

‘Oh, yes, don’t worry about me,’ Jack says. ‘I haven’t been sleeping so well, these last few nights. But now this business is behind us for today, maybe we can relax. Evan! Come back in here and finish your tea!’

As they’re walking into the incident room, Hagen’s rallying the troops.

‘Gather round, people! We need to come up with an action plan fast!’

The team don’t need asking twice. They’re keen to hear the news from Harrogate, whether there’s been any breakthrough after Evan’s interview.

‘Someone ring upstairs and tell Mr Campbell’s PA he might want to join us,’ says Hagen.

As Dallabrida makes the call, Naylor dumps her handbag and phone on her desk, and finds pens for writing on the whiteboard.

The team’s pulling up chairs, making seats out of desktops. In a couple of minutes Campbell comes hurrying in, and the loud chatter in the room becomes more stilted. Campbell perches on the corner of a table and folds his arms, trying to look relaxed. Dallabrida finds himself a seat near the front, and gives Naylor a wink as he sits down.

‘So,’ says Naylor, ‘good news and bad news. The very good news is, Rose did a first-class job in persuading Evan to finally speak to us.’ A murmur goes round the room. ‘Obviously he’s still in a fragile state, but to have anything at all from him is a major step forward. The less good news is that what he could give us was very limited. From the moment of the snatch he was given drugs – given how he says they made him feel, we’re guessing Diazepam or something of that nature to gain compliance – but that’s affected his memory and his perception of his surroundings. So what there is is minimal.’

She uncaps a red whiteboard pen.

‘I’m afraid I won’t need much room to write down what we’ve got. He was kept mainly in one room, with very restricted access to a bathroom. All he knows about where he was is that it was on a high floor of some building, he thinks a block of flats. A room with a view, as it turns out, because on the few occasions he could look out, he could see a river with two bridges which we’re hoping might narrow it down.’

‘So you’ve no idea even what town he was in?’ asks Hagen.

‘Not so far, no,’ says Naylor. ‘So that’ll be Job One for someone – Brad, I’m looking at you – to come up with a list of towns that might fit the bill and print off some pictures of the bridges, see if he can identify which ones match his view.’

‘Does he know how far he was driven from where he was snatched?’

asks Campbell.

‘Not really,’ says Naylor. ‘A long way, he says, but anywhere would feel a long way in the boot of a car.’

‘Colour of car?’

‘Maybe light blue or silver.’

‘Make?’

‘No idea.’

‘Direction of travel? North, south?’

‘Doesn’t know, except there was a long stretch of motorway.’

‘What about his abusers?’

‘Several men were regular visitors. We had him look at some photos but we got no hits. All white, one with red hair. He describes them all as old, but to a boy his age that could mean anything over twenty-five.’

‘So the redhead could be the one who was at the petrol station?’

‘Very likely.’

‘Names?’

‘He says they used what sounded like code names, not their real names.’

‘So what you’re saying is, all we’ve got is a flat overlooking a river?’

‘And two bridges.’

‘That’s it?’

‘That’s it for now. But we’re hoping now he’s not actively repressing it, there’ll be plenty more coming back to him.’

THIRTY-EIGHT

12 December

Hagen's booked a conference room for the meeting, and connected a laptop to a screen up front, projecting a blank Google search screen with several windows open behind it. Campbell, Hagen and Rose are already seated round the table, set for the long haul with coffee and biscuits, notepads and pens and an old-school *Road Atlas of Britain* Campbell's fetched from his car.

When Naylor arrives, she's out of breath from hurrying, her hair damp from running through the rain.

'Sorry,' she says. 'I was talking to Cheshire. In a nutshell, they've nothing new to report and they're desperate for us to come up with something from this. The press is all over them. The *Sun*'s running a piece on their Chief Constable's alleged crazy budgeting priorities. Apparently he authorised hundreds of thousands to be spent on a crack-down on speeding last year, and they're questioning why that money wasn't spent on catching paedophiles. Unfortunately for him, there might be a case to answer.'

'Let's get started then, shall we?' says Campbell, leaning forward to take a biscuit. 'Bradley, why don't you kick off by showing us what you've found?'

'Well,' says Hagen, 'all I did really was Google every way I could think of for twin bridges over rivers. I restricted it to UK cities and major towns because the high-rise view excludes everything else, on the principle you don't get high-rises outside urban areas. Here, for example.'

He clicks on the tab for one of the open windows. The screen fills with an attractive image of two bridges over a wide river.

'This is the Tamar Bridge in Plymouth, alongside the Royal Albert rail bridge, running between Cornwall and Devon. I think we should rule this out for two reasons. First, the settlements with a view of the bridges are mostly full of private houses and in no way fit Evan's description of the

place he was held. No sign of high-rises anywhere. Also, if you look here, you can see a third stone-built bridge just up-river, so I think if this were the place, Evan would have mentioned three bridges, not two. And it's not a conclusive point but Plymouth's a heck of a way from Pontefract.'

Campbell is nodding.

'That's not it. Are we all agreed? Let's move on.'

Hagen opens up another tab. The landscape on this photograph is more urban, and again shows two bridges running over a wide stretch of water.

'Rochester in Kent, a road and a railway bridge crossing the Medway. You can see in this area here, there are blocks of flats which might fit the description.'

'Kent,' says Naylor. 'It's near London, and not too far from the abduction site. That's a big tick for me.'

'Those blocks of flats, though,' says Rose. 'They're low-rise rather than high-rise. I got the impression from Evan he was on a really high floor.'

'He didn't really know, though, did he?' Hagen puts in. 'I say this one's a possibility.'

'I agree,' says Campbell. 'How many of these possibles are there, Bradley?'

Hagen glances at his notes.

'Seven in total, Sir. But I think good possibilities, maybe three or four.'

'Carry on, then,' Campbell says.

There's a lengthy discussion on Manchester, where two or even three sites look like possibilities.

'Plus it's not far from where Liam was taken,' Hagen says.

'That's a daunting prospect,' says Rose. 'Just look at all those flats.'

'Doesn't that make it all the more probable?' asks Naylor. 'Sadly for us.'

'It's in,' says Campbell. 'We'll make use of Greater Manchester intelligence. Next.'

A new picture appears on the screen.

'Sunderland,' Hagen says. 'Same set-up as Rochester, a road and a rail bridge running parallel. And plenty of high-rises to go at.'

'Yep,' says Campbell. 'Next.'

‘Newcastle,’ says Hagen. ‘Same again. The good news is with this one, the bridge has that distinctive green arch, which Evan’s likely to remember.’

‘Got it,’ says Campbell. ‘Next.’

‘This is the last one,’ says Hagen. ‘Glasgow. I’ve put this one in as an aerial view, because to my mind it’s like London. There may be too many bridges. If you could see bridges, chances are you’d see more than two.’

Naylor looks sceptical.

‘I’m not sure. If you were in those flats down the bottom there, you might only see one, but from those on the far bank, you’d see . . . It’s impossible to say without going there and taking in the view. I think it has to be in.’

‘So where does that leave us?’ Rose asks.

‘We’ve got five possibles,’ Hagen says. ‘Glasgow, Manchester, Sunderland, Newcastle and Rochester.’

‘I love the way you say Newcastle,’ Rose smiles. ‘Newcastle.’

‘There has to be a plan,’ Hagen says. ‘We don’t have the resources to go charging off to all points of the compass on the off-chance we’ll find the right room with the right view.’

‘Too right,’ says Campbell.

‘We have to narrow it down,’ Naylor says. ‘I think the only way to proceed is to print off a montage of all of these places from as many angles as we can find and run them by Evan. Even if he only rules a couple out, it’ll be something.’

‘Just pray he rules out Manchester and Glasgow,’ says Hagen, ‘though I have a horrible feeling those are the ones that he’ll leave in.’

‘God help us then,’ says Campbell.

‘I think I should go back up there and talk to him again,’ Rose says. ‘If I go armed with photos, there’s a good chance he might help us nail down a location. It’s a question of coaxing him to remember but without pressing him too hard.’

‘Any more you can get from him will be a bonus,’ says Naylor, ‘and a level of certainty on the location would be phenomenal. But I’m not sure we can rely on the quality of the pictures we’ve got here. No offence, Brad. They’re from the wrong angles, not at all how Evan would have seen the

bridges. We need something better. Might it be worth contacting local councils, Chambers of Commerce, planners, rail operators, anyone we can think of, to see if they can help with publicity shots, stuff like that?’

‘Great idea,’ says Hagen. ‘Pity we haven’t got time to get people out there with drones. We need a portfolio for each place, with the bridges from every possible angle. Rachel, why don’t you and Rose take a town each, and maybe we can requisition someone to do another. I’ll do two since I had a head start.’

‘A vote of thanks is due to you, Bradley, for your hard work on this one so far,’ says Campbell. ‘And let’s make this our priority, so Rose has got something useful and solid to take with her by the time she has to leave.’

THIRTY-NINE

15 December

A few days before Christmas. In the red light of the Christmas tree and the fire, Evan, Jack and Claire are watching a programme about bygone children's television, a countdown of the most popular programmes from the last fifty years.

Jack remembers most of them well, and Claire remembers many. For both of them, it's enjoyable nostalgia, and Evan's amused by the bright and imaginative characters he's never met before, and incredulous at the sometimes poor quality of the animations and the occasional oddness of what passed in his mother and grandpa's days as youthful entertainment.

They pass through many well-remembered theme tunes – *Andy Pandy*, *Captain Pugwash*, *Tales of the Riverbank*, *Noggin the Nog* – until a piece of familiar, cheerful music fills the room.

'Oh, I used to love this!' says Claire. 'Every tea-time, just before the news.'

On the screen there's a little girl puppet with a bow in her hair, and a shaggy-coated dog zipping about. Moments later, they're joined by a purple-faced puppet on a spring, and a slow-moving rabbit whose eyes droop as if he's been smoking dope.

'*The Magic Roundabout*,' the announcer is saying, 'was one of the most popular children's programmes ever to hit Britain's screens. With its zany mix of loveable characters – including Dougal the dog and Florence, Mr Rusty the organ grinder, Brian the snail and jack-in-the-box Zebedee with his nightly sign-off – viewers were entertained . . .'

Evan reaches out and touches his mother's arm.

Claire looks at him.

'Evan? Are you OK?'

His face appears frozen, as if he's glimpsed something which has scared him very badly.

‘What is it, sweetheart?’

Evan says nothing, but seems to have lost all interest in the TV. He picks up one of his bee books and opens it on his knee, but Claire can tell he isn’t seeing the page.

The programme runs on, and Evan never turns the page of his book, never jumps up to throw more logs on the fire.

When the programme ends, Claire feigns a brightness she isn’t feeling.

‘Shall I make some hot chocolate?’ she asks, but Jack prefers his whisky and Evan shakes his head. ‘Well, I want some,’ she says, and goes to the kitchen, but as she’s finding a mug and milk, she hears the lounge door open, and a few moments later, the creak of the second stair from the top, as Evan retreats in silence to his room.

FORTY

17 December

Claire manages a smile as Rose leads Evan away, back into the cocooned rooms of the Vulnerable Witness Suite, trying to find the *he'll be fine* optimism she relied on in his early primary school days, not finding it in this non-parallel situation. Back then, there were other mums to call, plenty to occupy her mind. Now she sits down on the lime-green sofa and tries not to be resentful, not to think how, as Evan's in here, other women's children are preparing for Christmas, rehearsing school plays, shopping with friends. Living normal lives. She thinks back to the days when Evan was small, to the excitement of Christmas Eve, to hanging stockings and putting out reindeer food, the shrieks and laughter on opening presents, the delight he took in looking out of the window for Santa Claus.

Times change.

Times do change. This time last year, Evan appeared to be lost to them forever, and life seemed a burden in every way. Now she's living again for her son, at a time when his friends – boys like Stewie – are cutting the ties. She and Evan are bound together more tightly than ever, and she must try and encourage him back into a world he's no wish to rejoin.

She has her cross to bear, but it's surely much lighter than it was before he came back, and looked at from some angles, it's no burden at all. This Christmas, that dreadful weight has passed over, to a family named Keslake she hopes never to meet.

Better by far to be sitting on this sofa than to be Mrs Keslake, weeping and desperate to know where her son is. Looking at it that way, Claire's glad to be here, appreciating that there are far, far worse places she might be.

The room's the same as last time – same soft chairs, same biscuits on the table, same picture on the wall – but the woman with Rose is different, a quietly smiling woman from Social Services whose name Evan can't recall.

‘Thanks for coming back, Evan,’ says Rose. ‘Sit down wherever you like. Have you been OK since we talked?’

Evan nods. Rose thinks he looks a little pale, as if he might not have slept well.

‘All we want to ask you to do today is have a look at some photographs.’

Evan stiffens, and Rose knows he’s thinking of the offender portfolio, a nightmare gallery of men who’d trouble anyone’s dreams.

‘They’re pictures of bridges today, Evan. We’ve tried to narrow down the town where you might have been held. With the description you gave us, we’ve come up with some possibilities. Even if you can’t tell us for sure that we’re on the right track, if you can say that some definitely aren’t the place, that’s a help in itself. What I’m saying is, a no is as useful as a yes. So will you have a look?’

Evan nods again. He’s retreated into silence, and that troubles her, since it’s likely to be their interview that’s set him back. At the same time, she’s a realist, and knows that can’t be helped. Getting to Liam Keslake is the number one driver now.

They’ve all done their best to find high-quality photos from every possible angle. She agreed to take Manchester, and since they’re the ones she’s most familiar with, she decides to show them first.

She lays out six pictures of bridges, some over the canal, some over the river. Evan seems willing to co-operate and leans forward to get a good look, but she can see from his expression there’s no recognition there.

He shakes his head.

Next, the Tyne Bridge in Newcastle with the High Level Bridge behind. There’s actually a third bridge in between them, but from many angles you wouldn’t know. There are four photos of these bridges, and Evan studies them for a while.

‘Might it be these, Evan?’ asks Rose.

‘I don’t know,’ says Evan. ‘Maybe. I’m not sure.’

‘We’ll leave this town in as a possibility, then.’

She moves on to Glasgow, but he rejects the pictures out of hand.

‘That’s not it. The river didn’t look like that.’

Knowing Campbell will be pleased to have both Manchester and Glasgow in the reject pile, Rose moves on.

Sunderland. Again, he considers for a while.

‘Maybe.’

‘OK. This place?’

She shows him pictures of Rochester. She has to admit, she’s finding this tricky herself. One bridge looks very much like another after a while, and the rivers they cross look almost identical.

He shakes his head.

‘I don’t know.’

‘But it could be?’

‘Yes.’

‘Thanks, Evan. That’s very helpful, very helpful indeed. Is there anything you’d like to ask me or tell me, anything you might have remembered since we last talked?’

She’s expecting the standard answer – no – and so is taken aback when he says, ‘Yes.’

‘Oh. Great. What is it? What would you like to tell us?’

‘I watched a programme,’ he says hesitantly. ‘It was about kids’ TV, old-fashioned stuff from years ago. The characters on this one programme . . . I recognised the names, like they’d pinched them to use as code names or avatars or something. They thought using them was funny. I suppose they did it so we wouldn’t know who they really were, if we ever got out.’

There’s a prickling on the back of Rose’s neck.

‘What was the programme, Evan?’

‘Something about a roundabout. It had this really annoying music.’

She frowns, casting her mind back to childhood.

‘One called himself Mr Rusty, the one with red hair,’ says Evan. ‘There was Dylan and Florence.’

‘*The Magic Roundabout*,’ says Rose. ‘They called themselves characters from *The Magic Roundabout*.’

‘I didn’t get it at first,’ says Evan. ‘But they kept saying the names on this programme, and I realised what was going on.’

‘That’s fantastic, Evan,’ says Rose. ‘I’ll pass that on to the team. Thank

you.'

He looks down at the table.

'Will it help you find Liam?' he asks, quietly. 'That's why I told you.'

'I hope so, sweetheart,' says Rose. 'Everything you tell us – like the bridges and the names just now – is a piece in a jigsaw. And the more pieces we have in that jigsaw, the clearer the picture becomes.'

He nods his understanding.

'There're some other things.'

Beside her, the woman from Social Services leans forward to speak, but Rose forbids her with her hand.

Evan's foot begins to tap the floor, and he starts looking around the room, doubtful if he should go on.

'This place is safe, Evan,' says Rose. 'Whatever you say is secret between us, until you say it's not.'

Evan's remembering what Jack said to him, about lion-hearted Ferrers men.

He thinks about leaving school that day, for the last time ever, when he was in the final few minutes of normal life, unaware of the fact, so unprepared.

He finds a blur of a memory, him and Stewie crossing the school playing field, sharing a Kit-Kat. No, that wasn't the right day; the day he's remembering was warm and sunny and they weren't wearing their blazers. They were heading home for tea, chicken nuggets or whatever. Home like it used to be, a cosy, welcoming place, when he still believed in the existence of safe havens.

The day he was taken, the memories are distorted. Sepia photographs of smiling boys, silver cups with purple ribbons, the school smells of changing rooms and the canteen. The shock of a hand over his mouth, the terror and the crying. Those memories are a giant stain, a spill of darkness which wiped out everything before.

He closes his eyes, remembering the blackness of that first confinement. When he opens them, he focuses on the picture of the purple heather, making himself think of the peaty scent of the moors in August bloom.

'They put in me in different cars,' he says. 'They kept changing cars

and sometimes the driver. One of them had tattoos.'

'What kind of tattoos?'

'I couldn't see very well. It was really dark by then. I saw them on his neck when he gave me a drink. I drank it and then they made me get back in the boot. I was really cold and shivering. Sometimes I could hear music on the radio, and sometimes I could hear them talking, but only bits.'

The woman from Social Services looks close to tears.

'Is there anything you can remember them saying from that day they took you?' asks Rose. 'Anything about where you were going?'

Evan looks down at the table, thinking.

'Only strange things. I think they must have given me drugs in the drink. One of them was talking about someone who'd bought a spider. I don't like spiders. It made me think there might be spiders in the boot.'

Rose shudders.

'I don't like spiders either. You've done really, really well, Evan. Shall we finish for today?'

'Will you let me know when you find Liam?' Evan asks.

'I'll let you know personally,' Rose promises.

As she's gathering up her folder, she recalls something which struck her.

'When you were talking about the names – Mr Rusty and Brian – you said *we*, Evan. *So we wouldn't know*. Are you saying you weren't alone in this place?'

Evan doesn't want to be misleading.

'I don't know,' he says. 'I never saw any other children. It could have been next door, or in the room above. It was just that sometimes, I thought I could hear a girl crying.'

As they drive away from Harrogate police station, Claire represses all the questions she'd like to ask, which are essentially no more than social niceties – how did you get on, are you OK? Those are questions none of them must ask, which she, in one way, welcomes, since she certainly wants no details of the conversations in that room. And she appreciates it's a relief to Evan to know that once he's left the police station, the subject isn't coming back, at least not today. Not until the phone rings again with another request for him to attend.

She's feeling the pressure easing off, an end-of-term lightness of no immediate obligations.

'What shall we do now?' she asks. 'Shall we go and get something to eat? And how about some Christmas shopping? You could get something for Dad and Grandpa.'

It's a long shot. Evan's still uncomfortable in public places, but to her surprise, he shrugs OK. She finds parking on Montpellier Hill, and as they walk together across the park, she notices he's not clinging to her as much as he usually does when they're out, maybe because he can see across the open grassy space who's close by and make his own assessment of threats, unsurprisingly finding none in an elderly couple and a woman walking a pair of dachshunds.

The dachshunds make him smile. As they cross the road to Bettys Tea Rooms, she feels Evan draw closer, seeking protection from the strangers they're passing on the pavement. But still, Harrogate's not like down south with its overcrowded supermarkets, its bustling high streets and dense traffic. There's no need here to get too close to anyone he might want to avoid, and there's plenty of space to step away from anyone who might remind him of people he's trying to forget.

As Claire's hoped, the tea room is an oasis of gentility, like opening a door into another time, a time she can't herself remember of good manners and polite hospitality. Above all, it feels confidently, unthreateningly safe, a storybook place where nothing worse could possibly happen than that you might spill tea on one of the starched tablecloths. The air is sweet with chocolate and mince pie spices, and she senses Evan relax and dare to take a step away from her, putting an almost normal distance between them.

A waitress dressed in a high-necked blouse and white apron leads them to a table. Evan orders hot chocolate and – loving the name – a Fat Rascal scone. Claire chooses Ceylon Blue Sapphire tea and a slice of lemon curd torte. Their table has a view of the road along the edge of the park, and as they eat and drink, the woman with the dachshunds passes by.

'I'd like a dog like that,' says Evan, and it strikes Claire that in that throw-away remark there's an aspiration, an imagining of a future for himself she wouldn't have seen in him six months ago. She sees, too, that

he's relishing his food, spooning up whipped cream and chocolate flakes from his tall glass of chocolate, carefully buttering each piece of his giant scone, rather than shovelling it in unaware as he did when he first came back. Food then was no more than fuel to him, a matter of survival, something to be consumed as fast as possible in case there was no more where it came from, with the thought surely constantly hanging over him that any meal might be his last.

Suddenly, she feels the magnitude of her gratitude for being here with him. If she dared, she'd reach across the table and touch his adolescent, long-fingered hand, which she notices is starting to resemble Jack's hands, a little reddened from all weathers, a little calloused from hefting feed-sacks and forking hay and straw. A country boy's hand. But she daren't touch him; there's something still about him – and maybe always will be – of wariness, of distance. Any contact is on his terms, to be instigated by him. It's a privilege that he sometimes feels safe enough to touch her shoulder or her arm.

As she's paying the bill, Evan beckons her to the counter display of glorious confection, and points to the Fat Rascals.

'Grandpa,' he says.

The counter assistant bags one up, and gives it to Evan to take home.

They wander companionably along wide streets with the open space of the park to one side, looking into shop windows which are marvels of seasonal magic: twinkling lights, gold baubles and glitzy tinsels, ribbon-wrapped parcels, fairies, reindeer and elves.

Evan stops at the window of a gentlemen's outfitters, where there's a display of ties in bold and interesting patterns. Claire lets him take his time to choose one for Matt, and offers him money so he can pay. He's reluctant to go alone to the till, and she doesn't force him but leaves him by the door while she goes herself, turning round two or three times to make sure he's still there. When she does so, she finds him looking back at her for reassurance, holding his bag from Bettys, a picture of innocence whose innocence is lost.

Along the street, there's a toy shop. Evan wants to go in, and wanders for a while among the displays, picking up toy cars and wooden puzzles,

scanning the shelves of games, checking out the latest Lego, pulling out books whose titles intrigue him. Maybe he's moving on here, too; Claire notices the books he's looking at are young adult, more zombie and science fiction than Biggles, but when she offers to buy him one, he declines.

Instead, he leads the way upstairs, to a room filled with jigsaws.

'Grandpa might like one of these,' he says, and Claire agrees. A jigsaw might be good for all of them – companionable, quiet, absorbing. Healing.

'Which one do you think?'

Evan is drawn to a cartoon picture of a summery farm, with chickens sitting on a broken-down tractor, a sheepdog that looks like Millie failing to round up a fluffy flock of escaping sheep, a red-faced farmer being chased by a snorting bull.

He points to the farmer.

'That looks like Grandpa,' he says, and Claire laughs.

'It does a bit,' she says, 'but don't tell him so.'

From the toy shop they go on to buy wrapping paper, mince pies and some toffee for Matt.

As they wander back to the car, Claire's all but forgotten the reason they came to Harrogate, but she suspects that, despite his good humour, Evan has not.

FORTY-ONE

18 December

‘So,’ says Campbell to the team gathered in front of him. ‘Let’s put our heads together and see what we’ve got. Rose, can you update us on what Evan said about the bridges and let’s take it from there?’

Rose stands up.

‘Cautiously good news,’ she says. ‘Evan ruled out two of the most troublesome possible locations, Manchester and Glasgow.’

‘That’s a great relief,’ says Campbell. ‘Trying to nail down a riverside flat in Manchester or Glasgow would have been a logistical nightmare. So where does that leave us?’

Rose glances down at her notes. ‘We’ve still got Newcastle, Sunderland and Rochester. There were a couple of other things. He remembers being given a drink and feeling confused afterwards, so that may be how any narcotics were administered. On the original snatch, he recalls a man with tattoos, and overhearing a conversation about spiders.’

‘Spiders?’ Naylor frowns. ‘Sounds like the drugs kicking in.’

‘There’s one very troubling thing he said, I’m afraid. Evan believes there was another child being held alongside him.’

‘Oh crap,’ says Hagen.

‘He thought he could hear a child crying,’ Rose goes on. ‘Probably a girl. It could, as he says, have been in another flat, but we can’t rule out the possibility that we have other victims in the location.’

‘Wherever it turns out to be,’ says Dallabrida.

‘Absolutely,’ says Rose. ‘And one last thing I think you’ll find interesting. He had his memory jogged by something on TV the other day – which is a good thing in itself, because it suggests he’s letting his memories come back. I don’t know how useful this might be at this stage, but he says the men in the flat used nicknames for themselves. Characters from *The Magic Roundabout*.’

There's laughter as those old enough to remember recall the programme and do impressions.

'You know what,' says Dallabrida, 'there's an actual Magic Roundabout in Swindon. That's what they call it. I've been round it, and it's a soddin' nightmare, traffic coming at you from all sides.'

'Is that true, Leon?' asks Naylor.

Dallabrida winks.

'Would I lie to you?' he says.

But Campbell is frowning.

'Just a thought,' he says. 'Bit of a wild card. If there's a Magic Roundabout in Swindon, might there be one in Newcastle, or Rochester or Sunderland?'

Hagen picks up his phone and opens a browser.

'I think that would be too good to be true,' says Naylor. 'Found anything, Brad?'

There's a look of surprise on Hagen's face. He holds up the search results.

'A bus route,' he says. 'Sunderland used to have a Magic Roundabout bus route.'

There's silence.

'Sunderland?' asks Naylor. 'A Magic Roundabout bus route in Sunderland?'

'Yes,' says Hagen, reading from the screen. 'It went all round the town and along the river, apparently, for the shoppers.'

'Well, I'll be damned,' says Campbell. 'I'm surprised you didn't know that, Bradley, coming as you do from that part of the world.'

'I'm from Gateshead, Sir,' says Hagen evenly. 'It's a different place, like Windsor is different from Reading.'

But Campbell isn't listening.

'Let's get to it, people,' he says. 'I think we just got our next lead.'

As Naylor puts the key in her door after her visit to the hairdresser's, her phone begins to ring. Laden down with shopping, she hurries to open the door, drops her bags on the hall floor and digs her phone out of her coat pocket.

‘Hello, Ron.’

‘Merry Christmas.’

‘You’re being a bit previous. It’s days away yet.’ She glances in the hall mirror at her freshly blow-dried hair, all silky curls and with a level of shininess she could never hope to emulate herself, and decides it looks pretty good. ‘Though the festivities begin tonight, call-outs permitting. Big night out at Alfonso’s. Bet you wish you were joining us, don’t you?’

Ron laughs.

‘Not really. I remember last year some pillock spilled a pint of raspberry cider or some such horror in my lap and I spent the rest of the evening feeling like I was wearing a wet nappy. Alfonso’s wife lent me a hair-dryer but it didn’t help much. And then there was an hour-long wait for a taxi in the pissing rain. But you go ahead, enjoy yourself.’

Naylor smiles.

‘Thanks. I’m sure I will.’

‘Who’s your date, Rach?’

‘I haven’t really got one.’

‘Not a certain senior officer from Traffic, I hope?’

Naylor feels a deep blush rise up her neck and cheeks.

‘What d’you mean?’

‘Don’t you mean *who* do I mean? You know who I mean. Stop wasting your time there, for pity’s sake. He’s got form. You’re not the first and you won’t be the last.’

‘How do you know about that?’

‘Aha. Uncle Ron’s network of spies runs right through that building. I didn’t climb the slippery pole without knowing who’s shagging who.’

‘Bastard. Anyway, that’s long over. I told him where to go over the summer, so your info’s not as current as you’d like to think.’

‘How do you know? Betcha I can put the name of the man you’ll be leaving with tonight in a sealed envelope right now and I’d be right.’

‘You do that, then. I’m not planning on leaving with anyone.’

‘We’ll see. Anyway, to be truthful I wasn’t calling to find out who you’ll be kissing under the mistletoe. I was wondering how the Ferrers case was going, whether the Keslake abduction has given you any kind of leg-

up.'

Naylor sighs.

'We're getting close. Evan's talking at last and we think he was taken to Sunderland, so obviously there's massive activity up there. But it's hard to know what's reliable witness statement and what's distorted by his being under the influence of the drugs they were giving him. He's mentioned tattoos, buying spiders, *The Magic Roundabout*. At least we've got plenty to go at. The bad news is, he thinks he wasn't alone, that there may have been a girl there with him. Ron? Are you still there?'

'I'm here,' says Ron thoughtfully. 'That's ringing a bell, somehow.'

'What is?'

'A distant, forgotten bell,' says Ron. 'But it'll come back to me.'

'So go and lie down in a dark and silent room until you remember.'

'I'll do better than that. I'll spend half an hour having a wade through my notes. You never know what I might find in there. Well, I'd better let you get on. No doubt you'll be stepping into a fragrant bubble bath with a glass of fizz to get you in the party mood. Shame I can't join you.'

'Cheeky.'

'Seriously, have a great time. Let your hair down. And I'm putting that name in the envelope now.'

'Waste of a good envelope,' says Naylor.

The bar at Alfonso's is packed with people Naylor barely recognises as those she shares an office with day-to-day. She's glad she kept the red dress; she feels good in it, and it's pulling one or two glances as she makes her way to where Rose is talking to Hagen and a crowd of others from the department. All of them look smart, relaxed, normal, just punters on a night out, a regular office party. Hagen puts a glass of wine in her hand, and as she takes the first sip, she hears a blast of laughter from a group near the door. Dallabrida's first joke of the night.

Dinner, as it turns out, isn't bad – essentially beef in red wine but with Italianate touches, breadsticks and pasta, curly endive in the salad and tiramisu at the end. By the time coffee's served, Naylor's enjoying herself, and in a moment of lucidity, she realises why. Last year, she'd spent half the evening in the toilets, obsessively checking her phone for a message from

him. This year, she's free of that compulsion. Anyone she might be interested in is in this room.

People begin to drift back to the bar, and the DJ fires up. The music's loud and upbeat, and with the laughter and the alcohol they've already drunk, she and Rose are thinking they might order more prosecco. Naylor bends down to find her bag and hunt for cash. When she resurfaces, someone's standing by her chair.

'Looking good, Miss Rachel,' says Dallabrida. 'Red is most definitely your colour.'

Naylor finds herself smiling. Dallabrida's looking pretty good himself, decked out as he promised in a tuxedo with all the works.

'Nice threads,' she says, pointing to his jacket.

'I've got me dancin' shoes on an' all,' he says. 'You fancy comin' with me for a test drive?'

As Naylor steps with Dallabrida on to the dance floor, Ron Perdue carries a large glass of Merlot into his study, sits down at his laptop and opens up the file of notes he made on the Ferrers enquiry.

It's all in here, everything on the red Ford Focus and the places he visited.

Where did he go first? Sevenoaks, on the trail of Jennifer Lambert, to those grubby flats with the addict on the ground floor.

He reads through the notes he made. There isn't much, just a mention of a South African doctor and Ms Lambert's probable emigration, and his observation that he thought she was unconnected to the enquiry, a turned-over stone with nothing underneath.

Woking. He remembers the address when he sees it written down, and he's noted the registration number of an orange Mini Cooper. Attention to detail: it's a bad habit he's no intention ever of breaking. There was a school nearby; he remembers hearing the noise.

Lindsey Stockman. She'd asked what his interest was in the car.

And there it is, exactly the little detail he's looking for.

FORTY-TWO

21 December

Naylor's phone rings as she's driving to work, sitting in traffic at the Cauldwell roundabout, hearing Slade on the radio for the thousandth time this week.

'Good morning, Mr Perdue,' she says. 'How's tricks?'

She edges the car forward a couple of feet. The dashboard clock is showing a time which is getting close to her being late.

'How's tricks yourself? Did you have a good time Saturday night?'

Naylor smiles.

'As a matter of fact, I did.'

'And Sunday morning?'

'Way outside your area of interest, Ron.'

Ron laughs.

'Do you want me to open the envelope?'

'Did you really do that?'

'The name inside begins with L.'

'What makes you say that?'

'Right or wrong?'

'As one of our clients might say under caution, no comment.'

'I'll take that as a yes, then. He'd be good for you. Maybe he was already.'

'Moving on.'

'As you wish. While you were out heating up the dance floor, I was having a look through my old notes, and I came across something that could be interesting. That address I went to in Woking, a previous owner of the Focus.' Naylor hears a pause as he refers to his notes. 'Lindsey Stockman.'

'You said you thought she was clean.'

'At the time, I did. Maybe she still is. But she mentioned a car her ex-partner bought when he got rid of the Ford.'

A gap in the traffic has opened up in front of Naylor. Concentrating on what Ron's saying makes her slow to drive into it, prompting a beeping horn behind.

'What sort of car?'

'An Alfa Romeo.'

'And?'

'Maybe an Alfa Romeo Spider? Nippy little sports car, used to be many a middle-aged bloke's wet dream?'

'Bloody hell. Evan's spider could be a car.'

'Could be, maybe. Could be nothing of interest, but if I were you, I'd be having an official word with Lindsey Stockman. Rule it in, or rule it out. No stone unturned.'

Naylor's thinking.

'How am I going to bring it to the table, though? If Campbell finds out I asked you to go there, he'll go mad.'

'You're forgetting our old friend, the anonymous tip-off.'

'Who'd tip us off about that, though?'

'That's the beauty of anonymous tip-offs, Rachel. You don't get to know who's made them, nor do you have to put a name to them.'

There's a short silence.

'You know what I'm going to ask you to do, don't you?'

Ron sighs.

'Ring it in, I suppose.'

'It would make my life a hell of a lot easier.'

'Do you want me to supply her full address?'

'It would save time if you did. And time is of the essence.'

'The things I do for you.'

'It's not for me, Ron, except in the way of saving my job. It's for Liam, and Evan, and for whoever might be next.'

'OK, I'll do it. But I'll be driving to a secret location and using an untraceable phone.'

'You've got a burn phone?'

'Haven't you?'

'Ron Perdue,' says Naylor, finally getting her slot to cross the

roundabout, 'there's a lot more to you than meets the eye.'

'I sincerely hope so,' says Ron.

In the incident room, they're studying a satellite view of Sunderland. The most prominent feature by far is the river, an undulating muddy snake until it reaches the dockside and the surprising blue of the sea.

Hagen uses a mouse to focus on the double bridge carrying both traffic and the railway lines. With the bends in the river, the good news is there's a relatively short stretch of the banks from where you'd see the bridges. And on those banks, there are very few buildings where there are flats with river views.

'Looks like here or here,' says Naylor. 'University halls of residence, or this building here, the Echo building. It was supposed to be Sunderland's best address when it was built, but by all accounts it's a bit ropey these days.'

'I don't think it's likely to be the halls of residence,' says Hagen. 'Too much turnover and in the hands surely of the university admissions office.'

'I agree,' says Naylor. 'The only problem is, the Echo building's huge. There must be over a hundred flats in there. We have to find a way to narrow it down.'

The situation seems ridiculous, but also fun. Naylor assumes a serious expression, and speed-dials a number on her phone. Across the office, she hears Dallabrida's absurd but funny ringtone – a tannoy announcement, *Will the man with the twelve-inch penis please pick up your phone?* – and watches him discreetly as he pulls the phone from his pocket and glances at the screen. When he sees who's calling, he turns his back to her.

'Hey, beautiful,' he says.

'Hey, handsome,' says Naylor. 'How's tricks?'

'I'm doing OK. Just thinking about grabbing lunch.'

'Lucky you. Me and Hagen have bagged ourselves a ride out to Woking.'

'Is this your way of telling me you're breaking our date for this evening?'

'Not breaking it so much as letting you know there's a possibility I might be late.'

‘How late?’

‘You should know better than to ask anyone who works in this office a question like that.’

‘You’re right,’ says Dallabrida. ‘I should, and I do. How would it be if you came to mine when you’re finished and we’ll order a takeaway?’

‘Tempting. Indian or Chinese?’

‘Your choice.’

‘Will there be wine?’

‘Red or white, madam?’

‘How could I resist? I’ll call you when I’m on my way.’

Lindsey Stockman appears harassed. Her blond hair is falling out of the clip holding it off her face, and as she opens the door, she glances behind her, as if she’s reluctantly abandoned something requiring her urgent attention. The hall walls are strung with clumsily made paper chains, red and green links marked by small, gluey fingers. In a room behind her, an episode of *Justin’s House* is playing very loudly.

Naylor holds up her warrant card, and Lindsey peers at it, then looks directly at Naylor.

‘Police?’ she asks. ‘I think you might have got the wrong house.’

The singalong music on the TV is annoying. Lindsey turns round and shouts down the hall – ‘Izzy! Turn that down!’ – but the volume stays the same.

Naylor introduces herself and Hagen.

‘Are you Lindsey Stockman?’

‘Yes.’

‘May we come in for a moment?’

Lindsey hesitates before standing back to allow them to pass. Pointing the way to an untidy kitchen, she dives into the next-door room, and moments later, *Justin’s House* is reduced to barely audible background noise, drowned out by the whining complaints of a young girl and boy.

Lindsey closes the door on the children and joins Naylor and Hagen in the kitchen. She doesn’t ask them to sit, but in any case the stools at the breakfast bar are laden with discarded coats and a pink backpack embellished with unicorns. On one of the worktops, bags of shopping are

waiting to be unpacked, and there's a mess of chocolatey crumbs and purple foil around an opened pack of Mini Rolls.

'Kids,' says Lindsey. 'I don't know why I bothered. So. What's this about?'

'We won't take much of your time,' says Naylor. 'We'd like to ask you a few questions about a car you used to own.'

'Let me guess,' says Lindsey. 'The Ford Focus.'

Hagen gives Naylor a sideways glance.

'That's right,' he says. 'What made you think that?'

'I had a man asking questions about it a while back, something about the brakes. Is he all right? Has there been an accident? I told him, the brakes were fine while we had it.'

'There hasn't been an accident, no,' says Naylor. 'You sold that car, I assume?'

'My ex sold it, yes. Nothing to do with me, and before you ask, I don't know who he sold it to.'

'We can find that out through the DVLA. Can you tell me what car he bought after that?'

Lindsey frowns.

'An Alfa Romeo. What's that got to do with anything?'

'What model?'

'A Spider, bright red. A beautiful car that was, a pleasure to drive. It's the only thing about him I miss.'

Hagen's pulling out his notebook.

'Can we just get some details from you, Lindsey? What's your ex's name?'

'Gary,' says Lindsey. 'Officially Gareth. Last name is Prentice, with a "c".'

Hagen hasn't made any connection, and he's writing down the name without thinking. But Naylor's memory has thrown up an image: the reconstruction following Evan's disappearance, and the caretaker standing by the school doors, telling Evan and Stewie to get a move on, as he rattles a bunch of keys.

'Gary Prentice is your ex?' she asks.

Picking up something in her tone, Hagen looks at her.

‘Yes,’ says Lindsey. ‘This isn’t about Gary, is it?’

‘Should it be?’ asks Naylor.

Lindsey moves to check the lounge door is still closed.

‘Would you like a coffee?’ she asks. ‘I was just going to have one.’

‘Thanks,’ says Hagen. ‘Milk and two.’

‘Just milk for me,’ says Naylor. ‘Do you know where Gary’s working now?’

Lindsey’s filling the kettle and finding clean mugs.

‘I’ve no idea. Our split wasn’t too friendly and we haven’t kept in touch. This is about him, isn’t it?’

‘I’ll be as honest as I can with you,’ says Naylor. ‘When we knocked on your door, this wasn’t about Gary, but it might be now. How did you two meet?’

Lindsey pours boiling water on to instant coffee and takes milk from the fridge.

‘He was caretaker at the school where I work, Woodrow Primary in Guildford.’

A flicker of understanding crosses Hagen’s face. Lindsey adds sugar to Hagen’s coffee and hands both him and Naylor a mug.

‘How long were you together?’

‘Not long, maybe about six months. Looking back on it, he was a rebound for me. My husband had just left me, and I was feeling pretty low. Gary’s attention was flattering. If I’d been a bit more myself, I don’t think it would ever have got past a one-night stand.’ She takes a sip of her coffee. ‘When we fell out, it was pretty much over anyway. He never wanted to do anything except spend time on his laptop – eBay, Auto Trader. That’s what he told me, anyway.’

‘What did you fall out about?’ asks Hagen.

Lindsey takes a deep breath.

‘I caught him taking pictures of Izzy. Not naked, nothing like that. But he’d got her in her bedroom wearing my lipstick and one of my silk scarves, and he was encouraging her to do these poses, what I suppose you’d call coquettish. Something about it made me feel sick, but when I challenged

him he got really angry. He said I was deranged, that he loved the kids and they were just having a bit of fun playing supermodels, but I felt I couldn't trust him any more. You read so many horror stories, don't you? It was over for me, after that. A couple of days later I told him to pack his bags and off he went.'

'What happened to the pictures he took?'

Lindsey's hands go to her face. 'I don't know. Oh my God. You don't think . . . If he's done anything with those pictures, I'll kill him.'

'Are you aware of the Evan Ferrers case?' asks Naylor. 'An abduction, late last year?'

Lindsey nods.

'I heard about that, yes. A boy taken on his way home from school.' She stares at Naylor. 'Not Gary's school? Was he working there? You know, after the incident with Izzy, I thought about reporting him, but I didn't because I thought it was just me. Tigress mummy, over-protective, you know? He must have passed all the DBS checks to be working in schools, mustn't he?' Naylor's eyebrows rise. 'Oh my God. I did the right thing getting him out of here, didn't I?'

'You absolutely did,' says Naylor. 'I just hope for the children's sake you did it soon enough.'

'Now that's what I call a result,' says Hagen, as they walk back to the car. 'If Prentice is still caretaker at Evan's school, he'll be easy enough to track down. I'll put a call in and get someone to bring him in.'

He presses the button on his key fob to unlock the car doors.

'This fella asking questions about the car a while back,' he goes on, climbing into the driver's seat, 'and us here on an anonymous tip-off. I don't suppose our anonymous tipster by any chance goes by the name of Ron?'

'I've no idea what you're talking about, Bradley,' says Naylor.

FORTY-THREE

22 December

In the interview room, Gary Prentice has adopted a bored expression which doesn't quite hide the spark of arrogance in his eyes. His solicitor is a dour, middle-aged man who's glanced at his watch once already, and clearly doesn't expect to be here very long.

Naylor settles in her chair next to Hagen, who's unnecessarily rearranging papers in his file. Prentice settles back in his chair, extending his legs in front of him so his feet touch hers. It's a power-grab on his part, taking up more space, but Naylor doesn't care. She folds her feet under her chair and gives Prentice a warm-up smile.

'Could you do the honours, Brad?' she says.

Hagen presses the buttons on the recorder, and they wait for the red lights to be steady and the beeping to stop before he recites the preliminary words – who's in the room, and the standard caution.

'We have a few questions for you, Gary,' he says. 'But before we start on those, we want to let you know we've been over at your house having a good look round, and we brought away a few things for closer examination. Laptop, phone, stuff like that.'

Naylor and Hagen watch Prentice's face, where the bored expression suddenly looks hard work and the spark of arrogance has gone.

'You had no right to do that! That's an infringement of my civil liberties!'

The solicitor shakes his head to let Prentice know he's wrong.

'Actually, it's all above board. We've a warrant all nicely signed and official,' says Hagen. 'Your girlfriend was a bit upset, I'm afraid. It isn't nice having people tramping all over your home, I realise that. But we believe the trouble was worthwhile.'

'We have some guys upstairs who really know what they're doing,' says Naylor. 'Everybody thinks when you press the delete button and empty the

recycle bin, all that embarrassing stuff on your tablet or your laptop you never want anyone to see has vanished, like a magic trick. But those guys upstairs in forensics are really good at bringing files back from the dead. Stuff you've downloaded, especially. There are little bits of data that get right down into the innards of your computer – down into the sewers, you might say – and that's where those guys go fishing. And they're going fishing on your laptop, Gary. I wonder what they'll find?

Prentice is silent.

'I'm curious too,' says Hagen. 'I'm wondering what'll get snagged on their lines. Do you want to tell us what's down there?'

'No comment.'

Hagen smiles a wide smile.

'This is no time for no comment, Gary. We've been talking to your ex, Lindsey Stockman. You remember Lindsey, of course. According to her, you lived together for a period of time at the address where she's still living in Woking. That would be, we assume, while you were employed – as you told us in your original statement – at a school in Guildford. Woking to Guildford, that's an easy enough commute.'

Prentice doesn't speak.

'While you were living there, she confirms you and she owned a red Ford Focus, registered in her name but bought and sold through your eBay account. Is that right, Gary? And that's of great interest to us, because that car is the very one which had Evan Ferrers locked in the boot. What're the chances, eh? You right there on the day Evan goes missing, almost the last person to see him before he's snatched, and here you are again, a one-time owner of the car he was found in.'

The solicitor is paying close attention, making lengthy notes on a pad of paper.

'There's more,' Hagen continues. 'While Evan was locked in a car boot, being taken – well, maybe you can tell us where he was being taken? No? Anyway, while he was being driven away from his home and family, he overheard a conversation, two men talking about someone buying a Spider. I think you owned a Spider, didn't you, Gary? Maybe you still do. That's not conclusive by itself, but it's certainly a coincidence some might say

connects you to those men. Put it all together and I'd say it's a good thing you've got legal representation.'

Prentice glances across at his lawyer, whose attention seems all on his notes.

'So this is where you start talking to us and volunteering information,' says Naylor. 'Do you know someone called Brian? Brian Birch? We're giving you an opportunity here to save your own skin. Only to an extent, of course. You know you'll be going down for a stretch. But that stretch could be much shorter, if you'll help us out. We'll get a result with or without help from you, so this is a short-term offer only. Talk to us about Evan Ferrers and Liam Keslake, and we'll persuade the judge to look favourably on you when it's time for sentencing. I should say, while you're considering your options, that we'll be making the same offer to Brian when we catch up with him, and only one of you can benefit. There might be a decent reduction in the offing, but it's you or him. So what you have to ask yourself is, when we make Brian that same offer, will he refuse it to save your skin?'

Prentice's response is almost immediate.

'I want to speak to my lawyer in private,' he says.

FORTY-FOUR

23 December

Tuesday morning, and everyone's in so early, by 8 a.m., the coffee machine is on its second refill. Naylor's trying to make good use of her time, going through some of the statements on a new incident where a businessman and his family were robbed at gunpoint. It's a serious case – shotguns, violence and three traumatised children – and it should be getting her full attention, but her mind's on what she hopes is happening in Sunderland.

A few minutes after nine, Campbell walks into the office, sharp-suited and overloaded with aftershave. For once, he doesn't have to call for attention. All eyes are on him, and a hush falls on the room.

'OK, listen up,' he says, unnecessarily. 'I've just got off the phone with Northumbria, and I'm pleased to report a fantastic result from there.'

Naylor's surprised to notice she has butterflies in her stomach, and finds herself willing Campbell to say what she wants to hear.

Campbell glances at his page of notes.

'Acting on information received from Gareth – known as Gary – Prentice, forced entry was made at an address in Sunderland early this morning. Two children – two children, ladies and gentlemen – were removed from the scene, one female, aged approximately six years old, identity not yet established – an interpreter is being sought – and one male aged eleven, who gave his name as Liam Keslake.'

A cheer goes up around the office. Naylor turns to Hagen, who's grinning, and Hagen gives her a double thumbs up. From across the room, a smiling Dallabrida gives her a wink.

'Furthermore,' goes on Campbell, when they settle back down, 'two arrests were made at the location and a further two have subsequently been made at addresses in Lancashire and Essex. Four men remain in custody to be charged with a range of offences. They are . . .'

 He looks again at his

notes. 'Brian William Birch, Daniel Kawczynski, Neil Alexander Roper and Peter Clive Sewell. I've been asked to pass on thanks from both Northumbria and the Chief Constable to everyone who's played a part in what I think we can call a highly successful operation, which will of course be front and centre in the press when the news breaks. So, well done everyone. Great result.'

When Campbell's gone, the air of celebration remains, but as Naylor approaches Hagen, her delight at Liam being found is tainted by the feeling that the path they followed to make the arrests was too long and too slow.

She sees the same in Hagen's face.

'Is it a great result?' she asks.

Hagen shrugs.

'We did our best,' he says. 'And they got Liam out.'

'We might have got to Brian Birch earlier, if Border Control had been able to confirm in a timely manner he never went to Spain. That was a clever plan, shipping his missus over there as a decoy.'

'How could we have proved he hadn't left the UK?' asks Hagen. 'We couldn't have known he wasn't there until we found him here. We didn't drop any balls, Rachel. We just juggle so many of them, it isn't humanly possible to keep all of them in the air. If we'd been allowed to stay dedicated to this case, chances are we'd have got a faster result. Don't beat yourself up over it. Just think how happy Mr and Mrs Keslake are at this moment.'

Naylor recalls giving Claire Ferrers the news Evan had been found, the car journey to Pontefract, the way Claire ran down the hospital corridor to find her son, and knows Hagen is right. Better late than never.

'Someone had better call Mr and Mrs Ferrers,' she says. 'It'll be great news for them.'

'I hope so,' says Hagen. 'Maybe we should let them enjoy their Christmas first.'

Naylor understands his diffidence. There's no doubt Claire and Matt will be relieved Evan's tormentors are finally behind bars. But their arrests bring the prospect of courts and prosecutions, and proceedings which may cause as much stress to Evan as they will to those sitting in the dock.

FORTY-FIVE

25 December

Christmas morning, 6.30 a.m. Sitting in his chair with its view out of the window, Jack has drunk a pot of tea, but has no appetite this morning for his toast and marmalade. The blackness from outside seems oppressive, but there's no prospect yet of sunrise lightening the sky.

He's thinking about Christmas mornings of days gone by: boyhood days, the almost sleepless Christmas Eves and the unbearable excitement of the weight of a full Christmas stocking on the end of his bed, the thrill of a new bike or sledge under the tree. He's been remembering too his first Christmas with Dora, when he bought her an engagement ring that cost him a month's wages. In later years, that ring looked as cheap as it was, a tiny chip of a solitaire she needed a magnifying glass to see. As time went by, he bought her better jewellery, but the first ring he bought her never left her finger.

Now she's wearing it in her grave.

He feels that pain again in his chest. It's come and gone more regularly these past few days, a crushing, aching pressure which makes his fingers tingle and numbs his shoulder. If he sits still, it will shortly pass, and when it passes, he'll go and find his tablets and his inhaler.

The kitchen door opens, and Evan is there, looking small in his dressing gown – though Claire's recently bought him new slippers to replace his outgrown old ones – and carrying a pair of Christmas stockings.

Something gives a cruel stab to Jack's heart, sharp enough to take his breath away, and he feels his face lose colour. Even so, he finds a smile for Evan.

'Here he is,' he says, with a cheerfulness he's pressed even to fake. 'Merry Christmas!'

'Merry Christmas, Grandpa.' Evan holds up one of the stockings. 'Father Christmas left this for you. I thought we could open them together.'

Jack smiles, and the stabbing in his heart fades.

‘Father Christmas brought me a stocking? Well, that is a surprise! I don’t suppose I’ve had a stocking in fifty years! I wonder where he found the stuff to fill a stocking for an old man like me?’

‘Harrogate, mainly,’ says Evan. ‘Shall we open them in here?’

‘I’ll tell you what, since it’s Christmas, you run through to the front room and light the fire. Let’s have it warm like your mother likes it, though the rest of us will be boiled to death like Christmas puddings. And then we’ll go and sit nice and comfortable on the sofa, and see what we’ve got.’

Evan leaves him, and Jack takes advantage of the hiatus to force himself from his chair. His tablets and inhaler are in the drawer, and the hit from the inhaler brings almost instant relief, making him wonder why he lets himself get so miserable with unnecessary pain. Downing the maximum dose of tablets, he puts the kettle on to make more tea.

In the lounge, Evan’s beaming with excitement.

‘Look at all the presents, Grandpa!’ he says, and it’s true there are plenty, put there by Matt when they’d all gone to bed. With the fire going and the tree lit, the room’s festive, but he’ll miss the little niceties from Dora, the chocolate brazils and merino wool socks and the Marks and Spencer’s vests he’s always worn.

Evan’s waiting expectantly on the sofa, the first of the brightly wrapped gifts from his stocking in his lap.

Jack sits down next to him.

‘Come on, then,’ he says, and takes out his first parcel. It’s a thoughtful gift, but fuel for his heartbreak: like Dora always used to buy him, a box of chocolate brazils.

Boxing Day has been and gone, and in the squalls and gales of mid-winter, Ainsclough Top is bleak. There’s snow on Blackmire Ridge which looks like it might be there till spring, and the old house will miss the cheering fairy lights and tinsel of another Christmas past.

Claire is sad to be leaving. Matt’s business commitments have called him back to the office, and Claire wants to spend time with him at home, but she will miss Evan badly. She’ll miss Jack too, and the farm; she’s come to love the peace of its isolation almost as much as Evan does, and the

gentle routine of its unhurried days is soothing to her soul. She's found time for things she never thought she'd enjoy – baking and reading – and she's dared to have a go at knitting with some of Dora's old yarn.

She's put one of her bags in the car boot, and she's hurrying back to the kitchen through the driving rain when the phone rings. Jack's sitting on the sofa, and it seems a shame to make him get up, so she answers it herself.

'Is that Claire? I'm glad I've found you. It's Rose Yazici here, from Ashridge police station. How are you doing?'

'I'm fine,' says Claire. She remembers Rose: the pretty one who looked after Evan when he was interviewed at Harrogate. 'You just caught me. I'm heading back south today. We've all been up here for Christmas. I think Matt's feeling it, coming home to an empty house every night, so I think it's time I did my wifely duty.'

'I'm glad you've had a good break,' says Rose. 'Recharged your batteries. I'm afraid you're going to need to be at peak resilience.'

Claire's heart sinks.

'Why?'

'It's good news, in many ways. I'd have come to talk to you in person, only we don't have the budget to keep making the trip.'

'I don't mind,' says Claire. 'Please, just tell me what's going on.'

'We've had a breakthrough in Evan's case. We've made some arrests.'

Claire sits down heavily on the stairs.

'You're kidding me. After all this time.'

'We haven't gone public yet because the operation's ongoing and there are more suspects out there we don't want to abscond. And of course we want you to know before it's in the press. There's even better news. We've found Liam Keslake.'

'Oh my God.' Tears fill Claire's eyes. 'Is he OK?'

'I wouldn't want to say that, not to you. You know better than anyone that there are degrees of OK. But he's alive, and going back home to his family as soon as the doctors give permission. Not only that, we've rescued another child, a girl who isn't known to us. We think she may be from Eastern Europe, but at the moment she's too traumatised to speak.'

'So where was this? Where did you find them?'

‘In the north-east, in Sunderland. Please tell Evan we wouldn’t have found them without his help. He was very brave and very unselfish to help us with those interviews. I know he didn’t want to, and how difficult it was for him. So please thank him from everyone, especially Liam’s family.’

‘I will.’

‘The thing is,’ says Rose, ‘we’re going to need him again. There’ll be a trial, of course, and we’ll need Evan to give evidence. It won’t be for a few months yet. There’s plenty of time to get him ready emotionally.’

‘It can’t be avoided?’

‘I’m afraid not. But it will be video testimony. He won’t have to see his abductors.’

‘How many were there?’ Claire has asked the question before she realises she doesn’t want to know, and Evan doesn’t want her to know. ‘No, don’t tell me. What do you think we should do about Evan seeing the news? Do you think it would be good for him?’

‘If he asks, then let him,’ says Rose. ‘Remember you gave him your word you’d take no interest. I would just leave the news alone. Watch something more cheerful instead.’

It isn’t until Claire hangs up that she notices Evan at the top of the stairs, standing in the shadows, listening.

She smiles up at him.

‘Hi, sweetie,’ she says. ‘That was Rose, from the police. Do you want to know what she said? It was quite important.’ She pats the step beside her as encouragement, and Evan comes down and sits beside her. ‘They’ve got them, Evan. They’ve got the men who took you.’

She isn’t prepared for Evan’s reaction, the burying of his head on her shoulder, the racking sobs and the way he clings to her. She puts her arms around him and pulls him close. The lounge door opens, and Jack appears. When he sees Evan crying, he looks concerned.

‘They arrested them in Sunderland,’ she says to Jack. Then she looks down at Evan, only now understanding the threat that he’s felt, the fear that they might come for him to silence him. ‘They can’t get you now, sweetheart. They’re all locked away. And they found Liam. Liam’s fine’ – though she knows this is a lie – ‘and there was a little girl there too. Rose

says it was thanks to you and what you told them in Harrogate that they found them. She says thank you from Liam's mum and dad.'

Jack's thinking of returning nightmares.

'I think you should stay,' he says. 'It's quite a shock for this young man.'

'It's a shock for us all,' says Claire. 'I'd better ring your dad and let him know.'

'And I think we should have a little celebration,' says Jack. 'A cup of tea, and chocolate digestives all round.'

Jack's right about the nightmares. A while after midnight, Evan shouts in his sleep, but Jack's so tired, he doesn't hear him.

But Claire hears. Pulling on her dressing gown and slipping on the fluffy rabbit slippers Evan gave her for Christmas, she makes her way to his room, and as Jack has advised her, opens the door as quietly as she can.

The books Evan had in his Christmas stocking are on the bedside table, and one has a bookmark in it about halfway through. But instead of the book he's currently reading, she hunts to the bottom of the stack, for a ragged old copy of *Winnie the Pooh*, and by the light seeping through the doorway, she finds the page she wants.

Evan is troubled and restless in his sleep, but Claire sits at his bedside and begins quietly to read.

'I don't feel very much like Pooh today,' said Pooh.

'There there,' said Piglet. 'I'll bring you tea and honey until you do.'

FORTY-SIX

3 January

In the mirror, there's no trace of the vital, fit, good-looking man Jack used to be. Instead, he's been replaced by someone barely recognisable, an old man with flabby biceps in a baggy vest. He's lost weight in his face, and there are blue bags under his eyes which make him look as if he hasn't slept in months. And he hasn't slept in months, not the long hours of deep slumber he used to fall into the moment the light was out, with Dora beside him in the best place in the world, his own bed in his own house. Sleep these days is erratic, demanding his surrender at odds hours of the day so he has no choice, wherever he is, but to find a place to make himself comfortable and close his eyes. Yet when he most feels the need for it – in the lonely night with the place beside him empty – sleep is elusive and refuses to take him, so what used to be the world's best place is nothing more now than a reminder of all his world is lacking.

Wetting his face, he rubs shaving cream into the short stubble on his jaw. He makes the first swathe with the razor, then rinses the soap and whiskers from the razor in the basin and makes a second cut.

The pain which hits him is astonishing in its severity and suddenness, as if he's suffered a violent sledgehammer blow to the chest. Without knowing how he got there, he finds himself on his knees, leaning on the toilet seat with one arm, holding himself with the other, as if doing so will help reduce the pain. He's going to be sick, but doesn't want to be, as being sick's incompatible with lying down. He lies down now – his body compels him – as his mind is urgently weighing the possibility that this might be it, whatever it becomes. Yet there's a remnant of instinct crying out, a glimmer of hope that he might survive, if he can get help. It's that instinct which makes him struggle to shout – though the best he can manage is more of a groan – and realise if there's to be help, he must let them in. Before the black descends, with everything that's in him he reaches up and turns the

key to unlock the bathroom door.

What Jack remembers next is a view of the basin pedestal and his face on the bath-mat; the pressure of the door in his back, and someone calling his name; two men in green suits, and a yellow mask over his face; a needle in his arm, and the lessening of pain; being manhandled into a chair, and a skewed view of the pictures on the landing walls; Evan's tearful face, and the worry written on Claire's; the slam of the ambulance doors.

Beyond that, nothing.

Even though he feels like death, tender and sore inside and weighed down with a tiredness that makes it an effort to raise a cup of water to his lips, Jack's cheered to see their faces. Matt's hiding his concern behind a smile full of relief. Claire just looks pleased to see him, and Evan's beaming and proud to be carrying gifts – black seedless grapes, a James Patterson paperback and a copy of *Farmers Weekly*.

Evan's intrigued by the environment, the mechanics of the automatic bed, the table-on-wheels with its jug of water, the drip and needle arrangement in the back of Jack's bruised hand.

Claire's finding chairs as Matt sits down on the bed.

'How are you feeling, Dad?'

Jack wants to lie and say he's fine, but he's feeling so unwell it's too much effort.

'Better than I did when I was lying on that bathroom floor. I thought my time had come.'

'We brought you these,' says Evan, and lays the presents on the over-bed table. 'I wanted to get you a Mars Bar, but Mum says you're probably not supposed to have chocolate for a while.'

'What have they said to you?' asks Matt. 'What have they done?'

'Angioplasty.' Even though Jack should be feeling better, his breathing still feels difficult, as if something heavy is weighing on his chest. 'Some sort of stent. They should have done it years ago. Might have avoided all this drama if they had.'

'When are you coming home, Grandpa?' asks Evan.

'I don't know, son,' says Jack, and as he says it he's suddenly homesick, for the simple pleasures of his old armchair and a hot cup of tea, for the

view across the valley and the bleating of the sheep, for cold air that smells of rain and grass, and for Millie running ahead of him across the yard. He misses it all, and feels a sudden, devastating sense of loss as if it might be lost to him for good, and he wants to cry.

But he doesn't want to make a fool of himself.

'Pull up a chair, youngster,' he says, 'and help yourself to some of those grapes.'

'Don't you want them?' asks Evan, but he's already pulled half a dozen from their stalks and is popping them in his mouth. 'Do you want me to read to you? We brought a book in case you do.'

Jack thinks of the nights he's read to Evan, whether Evan in his sleep heard him or not, and it strikes him how, sometimes, life takes odd turns.

'I found nine eggs this morning when I went to feed the chickens. I fed the sheep too. I think one of them is lame, but I couldn't catch her by myself to see the problem.'

'Your dad will help you, won't you?' Jack looks at Matt as he speaks, and Matt frowns, sensing his father is talking about more than rounding up sheep. He gives Jack's hand a squeeze, and is surprised when Jack replies with pressure of his own, a tight grip which leaves his knuckles white. 'You must all help each other. That's what families do.'

Sensing Jack's uneasy mood, Claire tries to change the subject.

'Would anyone like coffee? I saw a machine just outside the ward.'

'Hot chocolate,' says Evan, without hesitation.

'I'll have one, yes,' says Matt. 'Dad?'

Jack shakes his head.

'Evan, you come and help me carry them,' says Claire. 'I can't carry three.'

Jack watches them until they disappear past the nurses' station.

'You will look after him, won't you?' he asks. 'He's got a tough time coming up. You'll have to take care of him while it's going through the courts.'

'Don't be daft, Dad. You're just feeling a bit down after the operation. They fill you full of drugs and you don't know whether you're coming or going. You'll be home to look after him yourself in a couple of days.'

Jack doesn't answer. On the monitor above his head, the line showing the rhythm of his heart is steady as it should be, but Jack can't shake a sense of dread, that the regular rhythm is no more than a diversion, and that an enormous change is waiting in the wings.

That night, alone in the dark, Jack can't sleep, probably because he isn't alone at all. Even from the luxury of a bay to himself he can sense other bodies nearby, occasionally hearing their snuffling and snoring. It isn't truly dark either, with fluorescent light leaking from the nurses' station, where from time to time the night shift gathers to chat and keep the patients awake.

But despite physical evidence to the contrary, Jack feels alone, and he senses the darkness deepening. He decides to keep his eyes closed so as not to see it, but with them closed he senses something else, someone standing watching him from the end of the bed.

He opens his eyes. No one is there, but the sense that someone's close by won't go away.

'Dora?'

He glances up at the machine tracking his heart – all the lines look normal – and closes his eyes again against the light he doesn't want.

As soon as his eyes close, he senses again that someone is there, alongside the bed now, almost touching his face. Maybe one of the nurses has come to take his blood pressure, and he waits to hear her speak, but no one tries to wake him. Lying perfectly still, he listens, but if someone is there, their breathing is silent. After a while, he finds he doesn't mind them being there. He's finally easing into sleep, tempting himself to drift off by replaying memories he loves: the first lambs of spring running on the home field; Dora on their wedding day; the day Matt first rode a bike; happy young Evan and himself hand in hand, carrying their fishing net down to the stream.

When the pain hits, it's a harder blow even than in the bathroom, an explosion in his chest which takes away his breath and numbs his arms. There's a moment he knows he should press his red button, but the thought of doing so is transitory and floats away.

Dora. His last thought is the certainty that it's Dora waiting at his

bedside, and he's grateful that she's there. Her presence soothes his strong objection that his time has come too soon.

2.43 a.m., and at Ainsclough Top the phone is ringing, heralding bad news, just as it was the night Evan was lost. Befuddled with sleep, Matt hurries down the stairs and grabs the receiver before the caller rings off. As he listens to what the nurse is saying, he's looking at the photograph of Jack and Evan, his younger, fitter father and his happy, smiling son.

'I'm very sorry,' says the nurse. 'It was totally unexpected. There must have been another problem we weren't aware of.'

Matt is in a daze.

'What do we do now?' he says. The question is rhetorical, a reflection on the abyss of the future, but the nurse answers with practical details on undertakers and morgues.

Matt understands none of it. When he puts the phone down, Claire's standing beside him. She puts her arms round him, and Matt begins to cry.

FORTY-SEVEN

9 January

In the days following Jack's death, some difficult decisions must be made. Matt and Claire are suddenly the owners of two properties, the Berkshire house where their life has been, and Ainsclough Top, where Evan is happier – as is Claire, now.

Matt and Claire are sitting in the kitchen, drinking tea and looking out on the view Jack loved, the view Matt grew up with. The rain has turned to sleet, and there's already a covering of white on the home field. Evan is in the lounge, staring at the scattered pieces of an Airfix model, seeming to lack interest in any pastime at all.

'I can't just quit,' says Matt. 'We have a mortgage to pay, remember?'

'Not for much longer,' says Claire. 'Whichever house we sell, there'll be no more mortgage. Evan doesn't want to live in that house again, and I don't care about it either. It would get snapped up. Close to motorway links, good school catchment area. All the reasons we bought it will sell it again.'

'And then what?'

'We'll live here.'

Matt's cup is at his lips. Over its rim, he raises his eyebrows in incredulity.

'Look at this place,' says Claire. 'Matt, it's gorgeous.'

Matt laughs.

'It's old and draughty and bitter cold. Set one foot outside now and it'll freeze your extremities.'

'But Evan doesn't mind that. He loves being outside. He's flourishing here.'

Matt lowers his voice.

'He's not flourishing, Claire. He's reclusive. He has no friends and no prospect of any. He's got the body of a young man and the emotional age of an eight-year-old.'

‘That’s a defence,’ says Claire. ‘It’s the plaster on the wound while it heals. One day that plaster’s coming off, and there’ll be a new Evan underneath. In his own time, when he’s ready.’

‘I wish I shared your optimism.’

‘What’s the alternative, anyway? If he never moves on, where else can he be safe but here? What’s your suggestion, that we move to Maidstone or Bracknell or Slough, where he’ll stand out like a sore thumb? I know what you’re thinking, Matt. You’re thinking you don’t want to give up your company car and your designated parking place and your smart office and your seat at that big table in the boardroom.’

‘I don’t see what’s bad about that. I worked hard for those things.’

‘I know you did, and I’m not criticising you for that. But in case you hadn’t noticed, something bad happened to us, and that changes everything. Our ambitions don’t count any more. The only thing that counts is doing what we can for our son, the same way as we would have done if he’d lost a leg or suffered catastrophic brain injuries. He’s crippled, Matt. The only thing is, we can’t see the damage. But we owe him our support until he doesn’t need it any more. Please, think about alternatives.’

‘What alternatives?’

‘There are other jobs, Matt. Other companies. Couldn’t you try looking for a job near here? You know it’s what your dad would have suggested.’

‘It’s just not what I see as my future. Our future. We like the urban life.’

‘We used to. Things are different now. Please.’

She reaches out across the table, offering her hand. He hesitates, and then takes it.

‘I’ll think about it,’ he says.

As the second hymn ends, the vicar beckons Evan from the front pew. Outside, the day is bitter, bright and blue; inside the church, the cold of centuries accumulated in the stone floor is numbing Claire’s feet. There’s the scent of white lilies, beeswax polish and, from the prayer books and embroidered hassocks, the mustiness of damp. Except for a throat-clearing cough, the rows of mourners behind them are silent. As he walks to the lectern, Evan’s new black shoes sound loud.

He’s getting taller, filling out, and in his suit, shirt and tie, Claire thinks

anyone would take him for a normal young man on his way to adulthood. And any normal young man would be nervous at the prospect of what Evan's about to do. For Evan, it's the equivalent of a difficult assault on Everest, and Claire feels so proud she could cry.

Painstakingly printing in his childish handwriting, Evan's copied out on to card what he intends to read. He, Matt and Claire have written the words together during an evening of reminiscence, Evan eating chocolate digestives in Jack's honour, Matt and Claire toasting him in Glenfiddich.

Evan props the card up on the lectern.

Claire's afraid for him. She's afraid he won't be able to speak, more afraid he'll look a fool. The silence grows long. Flushed with embarrassment, Evan glances down at his card and clears his throat.

Beyond that, the silence grows longer.

Claire's thinking about going to rescue him, standing up to stand beside him, when Evan finally speaks in a voice that's clear and strong.

'My grandpa was a man who loved the land. He loved the fells in summer and the frosty fields in winter. He loved to watch the fish swim in the beck and hear the skylarks sing. He loved his sheep and he loved Millie, his dog. He loved my dad and mum and he loved his friends and everybody here. He loved my grandma very much indeed.'

Chin trembling, he falters, unable to read any more of what he has written until he has wiped away tears with the back of his hand. Claire can hardly bear to look at him and see the misery of his grief. Matt's head is bowed.

But Evan carries on, and says his final words.

'My grandpa loved me, and I loved him. I miss you, Grandpa.'

FORTY-EIGHT

31 May

Crown Court Trial, Day 1

‘We have to stop meeting like this,’ says Ron. ‘People will talk.’

The Lamb and Lion is quiet, in its usual Monday lunchtime dip. Naylor is already sitting at a window table, though there’s no view to the outside through the thick glass in the leaded panes, only half-hearted, watered-down daylight which doesn’t reflect the brightness of the warm day outside.

‘Let them talk,’ she says. ‘It never bothered us before. Nice tan, by the way. Don’t tell me you’ve got the sun-bed habit?’

‘Not in the way you mean,’ says Ron, taking off his jacket and hanging it on the back of a chair. ‘We’ve had a couple of weeks away. Malaga, very nice. Didn’t want to come home.’

‘We all have to come home.’

‘Maybe,’ says Ron. ‘You want another drink?’

‘I’m all right with this, thanks.’ Naylor points to her orange juice and soda.

While Ron’s at the bar ordering his pint and their food – steak and kidney as always for himself, regardless of the weather, a chicken Caesar salad for Naylor – she’s thinking he’s changed, and trying to put her finger on exactly what’s different. Straight after his retirement, anyone would still have picked him out as a copper. He hadn’t lost the tension everyone at the job seems to carry, even on downtime, with the permanently overhanging threat of the ringing phone, regardless of whether you were in Malaga or Margate; the buzzing in the brain, *did I think of this, what if we did that*. All that seems to be leaving him at last. Looking at him now, he’s a regular bloke, as likely to be taken for an ex-accountant as a retired detective. It’s taken him a while, but it seems as if Ron might have actually, mentally, retired.

As he sits down, she sees it in his face. The old Ron had that skill of keeping one eye on the room, ninety percent focused on whoever he was with, ten percent aware of his surroundings, who was coming in, who was going out. For the first time since she's known him, he seems properly relaxed.

'Bottoms up.' He raises his pint, and they clink glasses. 'So. How's it going?'

'First day of the trial today. Nothing to report yet, of course, just the usual legal arguments, all the jury stuff. You know how it goes. It's going to be a long one. The whole case will keep the CPS in business for years to come.'

'How many did you Hoover up in the end?'

'The network we've uncovered so far includes thirteen men, some more involved than others. There's been a massive amount of work tracking them down, mainly via internet history and phone records, and we've shut down a number of sites on the dark web. Very nasty stuff. Let's not go there. Gary Prentice has already pleaded guilty but will only do two years, thanks to information he provided. But he'll go on the sex offenders' register and that's worth something too. Thanks to you, Ron.'

'That's a fantastic result, Rachel. I was merely following your direction. Congratulations.' Ron raises his pint to toast her.

'It gets me down sometimes, to be truthful,' she says. 'No matter how many of the bad guys we take out, there'll always be more tomorrow.'

'Why can't people just behave themselves, eh?' asks Ron.

'Exactly.'

'Ah, the problem of all mankind, right through history. Sounds to me like you're at that point where you have to abandon your ideas of saving the world and accept you can only do so much. Keep focused on your successes.'

'Is that what you did, Ron?'

He takes another sip of his pint.

'Sometimes. When June reminded me. The wisdom is hers, not mine.'

A young waiter arrives with their food. Ron's pie smells deliciously savoury, and Naylor briefly regrets her healthy choice, but there's a holiday

bikini to be considered, in a few weeks' time.

'Cracking,' says Ron, picking up his knife and fork. 'Wherever you go in the world, you can't beat British pub food.' He reaches for the vinegar bottle and shakes it over his chips. 'How are those two boys doing, Evan and Liam?'

Quietly in the background, a song Naylor knows well but can't name begins on the sound system. The lyrics seem sadly apropos, speaking of a return to childhood's innocence. Without a large dose of amnesia, for Evan and Liam that must be an impossible goal.

And yet . . .

'Liam I don't know about,' she says. 'He's not officially our case. But I've seen a fair bit of Evan, and I have to say I think he's finding his way. His own way, at least. He isn't hanging out with his mates down the skate-park or anything, and the parents are still concerned that he's stuck in his own little time warp, that he's suffering from arrested development. And maybe he is, but maybe that's OK. If he wants to stay a youngster for a couple of years – or even for the rest of his life – does it matter? Isn't there a bit of Peter Pan in all of us that would rather not grow up? Given a choice, I'd love to spend my time building tree-houses. He's not shut away in a dark room taking way too many drugs and hooked on video games, which is what a lot of people would call normal, these days. He's making the best of the terrible, awful hand life dealt him, and I think we can all learn from that.'

Ron smiles.

'Very philosophical.'

'We have to keep learning. Life's a shark pool. If sharks stop swimming, they die. If we stop learning, we sink.'

'And what shark's eating you today, Inspector?'

'Oh, I don't know.' Not really hungry, she lays down her fork. 'The way it was all handled – which wasn't exactly badly, but we made some mistakes – I'm not proud of that. Those mistakes weren't far off being fatal errors. It's all reactive, changing priorities every five minutes, so there's never enough time to do a thorough job. But while we were being transferred on to other cases – which I admit were important, it wasn't like

we moved on to handbag-snatching or sheep-rustling – Evan was still lost, still waiting to be found. And we weren't looking.'

Ron studies her.

'You didn't know that. You and I know that he was likely to be dead within days, maybe within hours of the snatch. People like Campbell and the Chief make difficult decisions. That's why they make the big money. You only have to do as you're told. They're the ones doing the telling, and those are tough calls they make.'

'I know. But if you hadn't got involved and done a bit of the legwork, we might never have made that connection to Prentice, and those thirteen would still be out there now.'

'We broke the rules. It paid dividends. We were lucky.'

'We have to play by rules. Those we're hunting don't.'

Ron picks up one of his chips with his fingers and holds it out to Naylor.

'Carbohydrate and fat deficiency,' he says. 'Bad for your mental well-being. Have a chip.'

Smiling, she takes it.

'You're the guys in white hats,' says Ron. 'Never an easy job, especially when you're facing a sea of black Stetsons. If you've had enough, give it all up and go and work at Primark. But I don't think you're going to do that.'

'Too right. I'm too pig-headed to give up. But you didn't come here to listen to me whinge about how the job's not perfect. It's hardly news to you, is it? What about you, Ron? I have to say you're looking good. Malaga suits you.'

'It's funny you should say that. Are we having pudding, by the way? I've a taste for some sticky toffee cheesecake. June and I are thinking it's time we did a bit of travelling. She's persuaded me to buy a camper van.'

'A camper van? Rocket Ron Perdue, one-time legend of the high-speed chase, in a camper van?'

Ron looks embarrassed.

'I know,' he says. 'Not quite my thing, you'd be thinking. But to be honest, I feel ready for life in the old farts' lane. We're going to head across to France, then just bumble about a bit, see where the road takes us. Down to Italy, if we get that far. Good food, maybe a bottle or two of wine, maybe

even a case or two.'

'Sounds brilliant. But what if we need your undercover assistance or an anonymous tip-off?'

Ron shakes his head.

'Not this side of September. But you never know, come winter, I might be available for hire. And I come cheap, these days. A pie and a pint, and I'm all yours.'

'I'm glad to hear it.'

'And what about you, Rachel? I trust you're going to make good use of your precious leave this year? No repetition of last year when you had two weeks home alone in your flat?'

'As a matter of fact, I am going away this year.' Naylor gives Ron a big smile. 'Two weeks on the Costa Blanca, just outside Alicante. I can't wait.'

'And will you be travelling alone?'

She smiles again.

'Not exactly.'

Ron reaches into his trouser pocket and pulls out an envelope.

'Remember at Christmas, I put a name in here?'

Naylor looks surprised.

'I thought you were joking about that.'

'I did it as a little test for myself, and now I'd like to find out for certain if I'm right. I reckon that I have in here the name of your travelling companion.' He tears open the flap, takes out a slip of paper and shows her the name written on it. Leon Dallabrida.

Naylor laughs.

'How did you do that?'

'By my amazing powers of deduction. Well, more observation, actually. He had a thing for you for a long time. It's just that you were a bit slow on the uptake.'

'I had other fish to fry.'

'Rotten, dead, stinking fish. Leon's a good man, a heart of gold.' He picks up the remains of his pint and raises his glass. 'Happy holidays.'

Naylor chinks her glass to his.

'Happy travels. Drive safely.'

‘Sometimes you need a break,’ says Ron. ‘But make sure you both come home ready to get stuck back into the fight.’

FORTY-NINE

28 June

Crown Court Trial, Day 21

Ron's not taking the kind of interest in the Ferrers trial he would have a year ago. There's too much to do readying the van, chrome to be polished, crockery to be bought, maps and ferry schedules to be pored over.

It's been a while since he's caught the Six O'Clock News, but he's sat down for ten minutes while June is putting the finishing touches to dinner. The credits roll, and there it is in the headlines, lead item on the BBC, a summary of the abduction and Evan's miraculous return, and now the lengthy sentences handed down from the trial.

A set of mugshots flashes up on the screen. Four unremarkable-looking men with no apparent links between them, dissimilar ages, dissimilar backgrounds: Brian Birch, a middle-aged engineer from Essex; Daniel Kawczynski, a good-looking young man, a care-home assistant from Bolton; Peter Clive Sewell, a red-headed Scot, most recently working as a gas fitter; and Neil Roper, clinically obese and unemployed, a one-time IT specialist from Letchworth.

Nothing to link them but their predatory appetites.

Ron switches off the TV. In the kitchen, June's spooning food on to their plates. Ron takes a bottle of sparkling wine from the fridge and holds it up for her approval.

'This time tomorrow, we shall be far away from all this,' he says. 'And I think that warrants a bit of a celebration.'

Sunlight on Water

July

Much of what they owned in Berkshire didn't seem right for their new lives. A small removal van carried personal possessions and little more: clothes, jewellery, books, the washing machine to replace Dora's antiquated model, their beds and the TV.

There are a couple of boxes from Evan's bedroom too, books, games and posters, the contents of his desk, and he's been upstairs a while, sorting through it all. When he comes downstairs, he's carrying a photograph mounted on card.

'Look what I found,' he says.

Claire is at the kitchen table, working on her laptop, surrounded by jars of preserves. She makes no pretence at being capable of making jams and chutneys, but there's talent amongst the women in the village, and Claire's making it her mission to form and promote a co-operative and get their produce into stores. Amongst the jars there's one of pale-gold honey, harvested by Evan (with help from Helen Trewitt) from his first hive.

'What is it, kiddo?'

Evan lays the photograph on the table. Taken in his third year of primary school, it shows his whole class, five rows of grinning children in blue uniforms and Miss Robbins looking disgruntled on the end. There's Evan, near the front, with a tooth missing, sitting between Stewie and Andrew Duffy, another friend from those long ago days.

Where are they all now? wonders Claire.

'I've been thinking about it a while,' says Evan, 'and I've decided I want to go back to school.'

When Matt comes home from work – a new job he finds he enjoys, despite a loss of status and an inferior car – Claire tells him the good news.

But Matt is sceptical.

'He's two years behind, at least,' he says. 'I can't see how it could work. He'll soon be fourteen, for heaven's sake. How could we put him in a class

of eleven-year-olds?’

‘There must be private schools, a special school who’d take him.’

Matt’s taken a cut in salary and feels the need – justified or not – to be careful with money.

‘And how much would that cost?’

‘Does it really matter?’ Claire asks. ‘There’s plenty from the house sale, and there’s his victims of crime compensation. What better use could there be for it than that?’

‘We could think about a tutor. Maybe that’s the way to go.’

‘I don’t think it’s the education he’s wanting, especially,’ Claire says. ‘I think he’s ready to make new friends.’

‘He might hate it once he gets there,’ says Matt.

‘Nothing ventured, nothing gained,’ says Claire.

At the weekend, Matt and Evan walk down to the churchyard to visit Jack and Dora’s grave. Evan’s picked wildflowers Jack always loved, and Matt’s cut a few of the best roses from Dora’s garden. The churchyard is peaceful, undisturbed except for a breeze in the beech trees and the cooing of belfry pigeons.

Matt picks a few blown leaves from the earth still mounded on the grave, and touches the newly placed headstone like a talisman. Evan’s taking his time placing the flowers in the vase.

‘So,’ says Matt, ‘your mum says you want to go back to school. Have you really thought about it?’

‘Grandpa thought it was a good idea. He used to say I should, one day.’

‘You could have a tutor at home, you know. Someone who comes to the house.’

Evan shakes his head, and places a white rose beside a stem of musk mallow.

‘I’d like to try a proper school. See if I can make some friends.’

‘If you think you’d enjoy it, I think that’s a great idea.’

‘Have you made friends in your new job?’ Evan’s question is heartfelt, and Matt feels touched.

‘I think so. It’s not something you can hurry. But there are some people I get on really well with, yes.’

‘So it hasn’t been all bad, moving up here?’

Matt considers. The air smells fresh, and not of diesel and fast food. When he drives home in the evenings, there’s no traffic. Best of all, he has much more free time. Family time.

‘No, it hasn’t been all bad,’ he says. ‘In fact, it’s not been bad at all.’

September

Claire's waiting for the bus. Through the open kitchen window she can see down to the road where it joins the track up to the house, and every school day, the wait is difficult, a reminder of the day he didn't come home. Every time she sees the bus pull up, she feels relief.

It's a day of Indian summer but the kitchen smells of autumn, of the fading leaves on the honeysuckle which climbs the house's old stone walls and of the blackberries she's picked to make a pie. She's thinking of tea on the terrace, because outside is always Evan's preference. He's drawn to meadows and woodlands and uplands, regardless of the weather. In that, he's like his grandfather.

The mini-bus pulls up at last, and Evan climbs down, gawky and slightly awkward in his school uniform. Usually, there's only Evan who gets off here, but today, there's someone else.

Evan is bringing home a girl.

Down at the stream, there's sunlight on the water, sparkling on the ripples.

Evan beckons to the girl, and leads her along the grassy bank to the pool where sticklebacks hide under the stones.

'Look,' he says, 'down there.'

She crouches beside him, and for a while watches with him the silver slivers cutting through the weeds.

'Come and meet my mum,' he says.

As they walk up the track, Evan takes the girl's hand. She isn't beautiful, but her face is kind.

Watching from the window, Claire sees them laugh, and feels a weight she didn't know was there lift from her heart.

Evan is reaching the end of his journey home. In his own way, he will be fine.

A honey-bee lands on the last of the roses, and Claire smiles.

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Version_1

To the A Dorm Boys

Brad Bradbeer

Curk Burgess

Jon Carlson

Larry Vitale

Four men who lived with me.

And survived.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER 1

Eight months ago, I watched my father's coffin being lowered into the ground. Today I was watching it being dug back up.

My uncle Myron stood next to me. Tears ran down his face. His brother was in that coffin—no, strike that, his brother was *supposed* to be in that coffin—a brother who *supposedly* died eight months ago, but a brother Myron hadn't seen in twenty years.

We were at the B'nai Jeshurun Cemetery in Los Angeles. It was not yet six in the morning, so the sun was just starting to rise. Why were we here so early? Exhuming a body, the authorities had explained to us, upsets people. You need to do it at a time of maximum privacy. That left late at night—uh, no thank you—or very early in the morning.

Uncle Myron sniffled and wiped his eye. He looked as though he wanted to put his arm around me, so I slid a little farther away. I stared down at the dirt. Eight months ago, the world had held such promise. After a lifetime of traveling overseas, my parents decided to settle back in the United States so that I, as a sophomore in high school, would finally have real roots and real friends.

It all changed in an instant. That was something I had learned the hard way. Your world doesn't come apart slowly. It doesn't gradually crumble or break into pieces. It can be destroyed in a snap of the fingers.

So what happened?

A car crash.

My father died, my mother fell apart, and in the end, I was made to live in New Jersey with my uncle, Myron Bolitar. Eight months ago, my mother and I came to this very cemetery to bury the man we loved like no other. We said the proper blessings. We watched as the coffin was lowered into the ground. I even threw ceremonial dirt on my father's grave.

It was the worst moment of my life.

"Stand back, please."

It was one of graveyard workers. What did they call someone who worked in a graveyard? *Groundskeeper* seemed too tame. *Gravedigger* seemed too creepy. They had used a bulldozer to bring up most of the dirt. Now these two guys in overalls—let's call them groundskeepers—finished with their shovels.

Uncle Myron wiped the tears from his face. "Are you okay, Mickey?"

I nodded. I wasn't the one crying here. He was.

A man wearing a bow tie and holding a clipboard frowned and took notes. The two groundskeepers stopped digging. They tossed their shovels out the hole. The shovels landed with a *clank*.

"Done!" one shouted. "Securing it now."

They started shimmying nylon belts under the casket. This took some doing. I could hear their grunts of exertion. When they finished, they both jumped out of the hole and nodded toward the crane operator. The crane operator nodded back and pulled a lever.

My father's casket rose out of the earth.

It had not been easy to arrange this exhumation. There are so many rules and regulations and procedures. I don't really know how Uncle Myron pulled it off. He has a powerful friend, I know, who helped ease the way. I think maybe my best friend Ema's mother, the Hollywood star Angelica Wyatt, may have used her influence too. The details, I guess, aren't important. The important thing was, I was about to learn the truth.

You are probably wondering why we are digging up my father's grave.

That's easy. I needed to be sure that Dad was in there.

No, I don't think that there was a clerical error or that he was put in the wrong coffin or buried in the wrong spot. And, no, I don't think my dad is a vampire or a ghost or anything like that.

I suspect—and, yes, it makes no sense at all—that my father may still be alive.

It particularly makes no sense in my case because I was in that car when it crashed. I saw him die. I saw the paramedic shake his head and wheel my father's limp body away.

Of course, I had also seen that same paramedic try to kill me a few days ago.

"Steady, steady."

The crane began to swing toward the left.

It lowered my father's casket onto the back of a pickup truck. His coffin was a plain pine box. This, I knew, my father would have insisted upon. Nothing fancy. My father wasn't religious, but he loved tradition.

After the coffin touched down with a quiet thud, the crane operator turned off the engine, jumped out, and hurried toward the man with the bow tie. The operator whispered something in the man's ear. Bow Tie looked back at him sharply. The crane operator shrugged and walked away.

"What do you think that was about?" I asked.

"I have no idea," Uncle Myron said.

I swallowed hard as we started toward the back of the pickup truck. Myron and I stepped in unison. That was a little weird. Both of us are tall—six foot four inches. If the name Myron Bolitar rings a bell, that could be because you're a basketball fan. Before I was born, Myron was an All-American collegiate player at Duke and then was chosen in the first round of the NBA draft by the Boston Celtics. In his very first preseason game—the first time he got to wear his Celtic green uniform—an opposing player named Burt Wesson smashed into Myron, twisting my uncle's knee and ending his career before it began. As a basketball player myself—one who hopes to surpass his uncle—I often wonder what that must have been like, to have all your hopes and dreams right there, right at your fingertips, wearing that green uniform you always dreamed would be yours and then, *poof*, it was all gone in a crash.

Then again, as I looked at the casket, I thought that maybe I already knew.

Like I said before, your world can change in an instant.

Uncle Myron and I stopped in front of the coffin and lowered our heads. Myron sneaked a glance at me. He, of course, didn't believe that my father was still alive. He had agreed to do this because I asked—begged, really—and he was trying to "bond" with me by humoring my request.

The pine casket looked rotted, fragile, as though it might collapse if we just looked at it too hard. The answer was right there, feet in front of me. Either my dad was in that box or he wasn't. Simple when you put it that way.

I moved a little closer to the casket, hoping to feel something. My father was supposed to be in that box. Shouldn't I . . . I don't know . . . feel something if that were the case? Shouldn't there be a cold hand on my neck or a shiver down my spine?

I felt neither.

So maybe Dad wasn't in there.

I reached out and rested my hand on the lid of the casket.

"What do you think you're doing?"

It was Bow Tie. He had introduced himself to us as an environmental health inspector, but I had no idea what that meant.

"I was just . . ."

Bow Tie moved between my father's casket and me. "I explained to you the protocol, didn't I?"

"Well, yes, I mean . . ."

"For reasons of both public safety and respect, no casket can be opened on these premises." He talked as if he were reading an SAT reading comprehension section out loud. "This county transport vehicle will bring your father's casket to the medical examiner's office, where it will be opened by a trained professional. That is my job here—to make sure that we have opened the correct grave, to make sure the casket matches the public records on the person being exhumed, to make sure that all proper health measures have been taken, and finally to make sure that the transport goes smoothly and respectfully. So if you don't mind . . ."

I looked at Myron. He nodded. I slowly lifted my hand off the soggy, dirty pine. I took a step back.

"Thank you," Bow Tie said.

The crane operator was whispering now with a groundskeeper. The groundskeeper's face turned white. I didn't like that. I didn't like it at all.

"Is something wrong?" I asked Bow Tie.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, what's with all the whispering?"

Bow Tie started studying his clipboard as though it held some special answer.

Uncle Myron said, "Well?"

"I have nothing else to report at this time."

"What does that mean?"

The groundskeeper, his face still white, started securing the casket with nylon belts.

"The casket will be at the medical examiner's office," he continued.

"That is all I can tell you at this time."

Bow Tie moved to the cab of the pickup truck and slid into the passenger seat. The driver started up the engine. I hurried toward his window.

"When?" I asked.

"When what?"

"When will the medical examiner open the casket?"

He checked his clipboard again, but it seemed as if it were just for show, as if he already knew the answer.

"Now," he said.

CHAPTER 2

We were at the medical examiner's office, waiting for the casket to be opened, when my cell phone rang.

I was all set to ignore the call. The answer to the key question of my life—was my father dead or alive?—was mere moments away.

A phone call could wait, right?

Then again, I was just hanging around. Maybe a phone call would be a welcome distraction. I quickly checked the caller ID and saw it was my best friend Ema. Ema's real name is Emma, but she dresses all in black and has a bunch of tattoos, so some of the kids, way back when, considered her "emo" and then someone combined "Emma" with "emo" and cleverly (I'm being sarcastic when I say "cleverly") dubbed her Ema.

Still, the name stuck.

My first thought: Oh no, something bad happened to Spoon!

Uncle Myron leaned over my shoulder and pointed out the caller ID. "Is that Angelica Wyatt's daughter?"

I frowned. Like this was his business. "Yep."

"You two have become pretty tight."

I frowned some more. Like this was his business. "Yep."

I wasn't sure what to do here. I could step away from my hovering uncle and answer it. Uncle Myron could be pretty thick, but even he'd get the message. I held up the phone and said to him, "Uh, do you mind?"

"What? Oh, right. Sure. Sorry."

I hit the answer button and said, "Hey."

“Hey.”

I mentioned that Ema was my best friend. We have only known each other a few weeks, but they’ve been dangerous and crazy weeks, life-affirming and life-threatening weeks. People could be friends a lifetime and not come close to the bond that had formed between us.

“Any word yet on the, uh . . . ?” Ema didn’t know how to finish that sentence. Neither did I.

“It could come at any time,” I said. “I’m at the medical examiner’s office right now.”

“Oh, sorry. I shouldn’t have disturbed you.”

There was something in her tone that I didn’t like. I felt my heart leap into my throat.

“What’s wrong?” I asked. “Is this about Spoon?”

Spoon was my second-best friend, I guess. Last time I saw him, he was lying in a hospital bed. He had been shot, saving our lives, and it was now possible that he’d never walk again. I blocked that horrible thought nonstop. I also dwelled on it nonstop.

“No,” she said.

“Have you heard anything new?”

“No. His parents aren’t letting me visit either.”

Spoon’s mom and dad had forbidden me from entering his room. They blamed me for what happened. Then again, so did I.

“So what’s wrong?” I asked.

“Look, I shouldn’t have called. It isn’t a big deal. Really.”

Which only made me sure that whatever it was, it was a big deal. Really.

I was about to argue and insist she tell me why she had called, but Bow Tie came back into the room.

“Gotta go,” I said to her. “I’ll call you when I can.”

I hung up. Myron and I stepped toward Bow Tie. He had his head down, taking notes.

“Well?” Myron said.

“We should have the results in a few moments.”

I realized that I had been holding my breath. I let it out now. Then I asked, “What was all that whispering about?”

“Pardon?”

“At the cemetery. With the guys digging and the one operating the bulldozer.”

“Oh,” he said. “That.”

I waited.

Bow Tie cleared his throat. “The groundskeepers”—so, okay, that’s what they were called—“noted that the casket felt a little . . .” He looked up as though searching for the next word.

After three seconds that felt like an hour passed, I said, “Felt a little what?”

And then he said it: “Light.”

Myron said, “As in weight?”

“Well, yes. But they were wrong.”

That didn’t make any sense. “They were wrong about the casket feeling light?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

He lifted his clipboard, as if it could ward off attacks. “That is all I can say until I have the necessary paperwork.”

“What necessary paperwork?”

“I have to go now.”

“But—”

The door opened behind me. A woman in a business suit stepped into the room. We all slowly turned and stared at her.

“The medical examiner is finished.”

“And?”

The woman looked left and then right, as though someone might be eavesdropping. “Please follow me,” she said. “The medical examiner is ready to speak to you.”

CHAPTER 3

“Thank you for your patience. I’m Dr. Botnick.”

I expected the medical examiner to look ghoulish or creepy or something. Think about it. Medical examiners deal with dead people all day. They slice them open and try to figure out what killed them.

But Dr. Botnick was a tiny woman with an inappropriately happy smile and the kind of red hair that borders on orange. Her office had been completely stripped of any sort of personality. There was nothing personal in the entire room—no family photographs, for example, but then again, in a room filled with so much death, did people want to stare at images of her loved ones? Her desk was bare except for a brown leather desk pad with matching letter tray (empty), memo holder, pencil cup (two pens and one pencil), and a letter opener. The walls had diplomas, and nothing else.

She kept smiling at us. I looked at Myron. He looked lost.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I’m not very good with people. Then again, none of my patients complain.” She started laughing. I didn’t join in. Neither did Uncle Myron. She cleared her throat and said, “Get it?”

“Got it,” I said.

“Because my patients, well, they’re dead.”

“Got it,” I said again.

“Inappropriate, right? My bad. Truth? I’m a little nervous. This is an unusual situation.”

I felt my pulse pick up speed.

Dr. Botnick looked over at Myron. “Who are you?”

“Myron Bolitar.”

“So you’d be Brad Bolitar’s brother?”

“Yes.”

Her eyes found mine. “And you must be his son?”

“That’s right,” I said.

She wrote something down on a sheet of paper. “Could you tell me the cause of death?”

“Car accident,” I said.

“I see.” She jotted another note. “Usually when people request we exhume a body, it is because they wish to move burial grounds. That isn’t the case here, is it?”

Myron and I both said no.

“Where is Kitty Hammer Bolitar?” Dr. Botnick asked.

Kitty Hammer Bolitar was my mother.

“She’s not here,” Myron said.

“Well, yes, I can see that. Where is she?”

“She’s indisposed,” Myron said.

Dr. Botnick frowned. “Like in the bathroom?”

“No.”

“Kitty Hammer Bolitar is listed as the wife and thus the next of kin,” Dr. Botnick continued. “Where is she? She should be part of this.”

I finally said, “She’s in a drug rehabilitation center in New Jersey.”

Again she met my eye. I saw kindness there and maybe a little bit of pity. “There was a famous tennis player named Kitty Hammer. I saw her in the US Open when she was only fifteen years old.”

A rock formed in my chest.

“That’s not relevant,” Myron snapped.

Yes, that was my mother. At one point Kitty Hammer Bolitar had a chance of being one of the greatest female tennis players of all time, up there with Billie Jean King and the Williams sisters. Then something happened that eventually ended her career: She got pregnant.

With me.

“You’re right,” Dr. Botnick said. “My apologies.”

“Look,” Uncle Myron said, “is his body in there or not?”

I watched her face for some kind of sign, but there was nothing. Dr. Botnick would have made a great poker player. She turned her attention to

me. "Is that why you're here?"

"Yes," I said.

"To find out if your father is in the right casket?"

I said yes again.

"Why do you think your father wouldn't be in there?"

How could I possibly explain it?

Dr. Botnick looked at me as though she really wanted to help. But even in my own head it sounded insane. I couldn't tell her about the Bat Lady, who may be Lizzy Sobek, the Holocaust hero everyone thought had died in World War II. I couldn't tell her about the Abeona Shelter, the secret society that rescued children, and how Ema, Spoon, Rachel, and I had risked our lives in its service. I couldn't tell her about that creepy paramedic with the sandy hair and green eyes, the one who took my father away and then, eight months later, tried to kill me.

Who would believe such crazy talk?

Uncle Myron saw me squirm in my seat. "The reasons are confidential," he said, trying to come to my rescue. "Would you please just tell us what you found in the casket?"

Dr. Botnick started chewing on the end of her pen. We waited.

Finally, Myron tried again: "Is my brother in the casket, yes or no?"

She put the pen down on her desk and stood.

"Why don't you come with me and see for yourself?"

CHAPTER 4

We headed down the long corridor.

Dr. Botnick led the way. The corridor seemed to narrow as we walked, as though the tiled walls were closing in on us. I was about to move behind Myron, walking single file, when she stopped in front of a window.

“Wait here, please.” Dr. Botnick poked her head in the door. “Ready?”

From inside, a voice said, “Give me two seconds.”

Dr. Botnick closed the door. The window was thick. Wires crisscrossed inside of it, forming diamonds. There was a shade blocking our view.

“Are you ready?” Dr. Botnick asked.

I was shaking. We were here. This was it. I nodded. Myron said yes.

The shade rose slowly, like a curtain at a show. When it was all the way up—when I could see clearly into the room—it felt as though seashells had been pressed against my ears. For a moment, no one moved. No one spoke. We just stood there.

“What the—?”

The voice belonged to Uncle Myron. There, in front of us, was a gurney. And resting on the gurney was a silver urn.

Dr. Botnick put a hand on my shoulder. “Your father was cremated. His ashes were put in that urn and buried. It isn’t customary, but it’s not all that unusual either.”

I shook my head.

Myron said, “Are you telling us that there were only ashes in that casket?”

“Yes.”

“DNA,” I said.

“Pardon?”

“Can you run a DNA test on the ashes?”

“I don’t understand. Why would I do that?”

“To confirm that they belong to my father.”

“To confirm . . . ?” Dr. Botnick shook her head. “That technology doesn’t exist, I’m sorry.”

I looked at Myron. There were tears in my eyes. “Don’t you see?” I said.

“See what?”

“He’s alive.”

Myron’s face turned white. In the corner of my eye I could see Bow Tie heading down the corridor toward us.

“Mickey . . . ,” Myron began.

“Someone is covering their tracks,” I insisted. “We wouldn’t cremate him.”

“I’m afraid that’s not true.”

It was Bow Tie. He held up a sheet of paper.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“This is an authorization to have the body of Brad Bolitar cremated per the legal requirements for the State of California. It is all on the up-and-up, including the notarized signature of the next of kin.”

Uncle Myron reached out for the sheet, but I grabbed it first. I scanned to the bottom of the page.

It had been signed by my mother.

I could feel Myron reading over my shoulder.

Kitty Hammer Bolitar had signed a lot of autographs during her tennis days. Her signature was fairly unique with the giant *K* and the curl on the right side of the *H*. This signature had both.

“It’s a forgery!” I shouted, though it didn’t look like a forgery at all.

“This has to be a fake.”

They all stared at me as though an arm had suddenly sprouted out of the middle of my forehead.

“It was notarized,” Bow Tie said. “That means an independent person witnessed and confirmed that your mother signed it.”

I shook my head. “You don’t understand . . .”

Bow Tie took the sheet back from me. “I’m sorry,” he said. “There is nothing more we can do for you.”

CHAPTER 5

Dead end.

We sat in the airport and waited to board our flight home. Uncle Myron frowned at his smartphone, concentrating a little too hard on the screen.

“Mickey?”

I looked at him.

“Don’t you think it’s time you told me what’s going on?”

It was. Uncle Myron deserved to know. He had called in favors and put himself on the line. He had, in a sense, earned my trust. But there were other things to consider. First of all, I had been warned more than once by those in Abeona Shelter *not* to tell Myron. I couldn’t just ignore that advice.

Second—and this was always front and center—I still blamed Myron for what happened to my parents. When my mother got pregnant with me, Uncle Myron reacted badly to the news. He didn’t trust my mother. He and my dad fought over it. My parents ended up running away overseas and then coming back years later and then . . . well, then it led to my dad being “maybe dead” and my mother being locked up in a drug rehabilitation center.

Uncle Myron waited for my answer. I was wondering how to tell him no when I remembered that I still needed to call Ema back. I held up the phone and said, “I have to take this,” even though the phone hadn’t rung.

I moved away from the gate and hit Ema on my speed dial. She answered immediately.

“So?” Ema said.

“So nothing.”

“Huh? I thought they were about to open the casket.”

“They were. I mean, they did.”

I explained about the cremation. She listened, as always, without interrupting. Ema was one of those people who listened with everything they had. She focused on your face. Her eyes didn’t dart to all corners. She didn’t nod at inappropriate times. Even now, even when she was just on the phone with me, I could feel that concentration.

“And you’re sure it’s her signature?”

“It certainly looks like it.”

“But it could be forged,” Ema said.

“Doubtful. I mean, there was a notary who witnessed it or something. But it could be . . .” My words trailed off.

“What?”

“After my father died, well, that was when she fell apart.”

“She started taking drugs?”

“Yes,” I said, remembering it all now. “In fact, Mom was so out of it . . . I don’t know how she could have made a decision like that.”

“So what now?”

“I fly home. I have basketball practice.”

I know what you’re thinking. Who cares about basketball practice at a time like this? Answer: I do. I get that that sounds warped. But even now—or maybe especially now—I needed to be back on the court. I needed basketball to be a priority. It was the place I thrived and escaped, and no matter what, I longed for it.

“Anything new on Spoon’s condition?” I asked.

“No.”

“How about Rachel?”

Silence.

I waited. Asking about Rachel may have been a mistake, I don’t know. Rachel was a part of our group, much as she, being immensely popular and probably the hottest girl in the school, seemed to have nothing in common with us.

“Rachel’s fine,” Ema said, her voice like a door slamming shut. “She’s dealing, I guess.”

I needed to reach out to Rachel when I got back. I had dropped a huge bomb on her—a life-altering bomb—and then I had flown away to Los Angeles. I needed to remedy that.

“So why did you call before?” I asked.

“It can wait till you get home.”

“Talk to me, Ema. I need the distraction.”

She took a deep breath. I could see her now, sitting alone in that huge gated mansion. “Why us?” she asked.

I knew what she meant. Nothing here had been accidental. A secret group called the Abeona Shelter had somehow recruited us—Ema, Spoon, Rachel, me—to help them rescue children and teens. This was never stated. We never applied for the job, and it wasn’t as though they had come to us. It just sort of . . . happened.

“I ask myself that every day,” I said.

“And?”

“I don’t know.”

“There has to be a reason,” Ema said. “First Ashley, then Rachel, and now—”

“Now what?”

“Someone else is missing,” she said.

My grip on the phone tightened. “Who?”

“You don’t know him.”

Silly, but I had thought that I knew everyone Ema knew. Maybe it was because she always played the big-girl-outcast-loner to perfection. The other kids made fun of her weight and her all-black clothes. Ema always sat by herself at lunch in the cafeteria. She had taken sullen and raised it to an art form.

“But you do?” I said.

“Yes.”

“Who?”

“He’s . . . well, he’s kind of my boyfriend.”

CHAPTER 6

Man, I hadn't expected that answer.

How could I not know Ema had a boyfriend? How could she keep something like that from me? I mean, don't get me wrong. I thought it was great. Ema was so awesome. She deserved somebody.

So why was I annoyed?

Because we told each other everything, didn't we? Now I wasn't so sure. *I* told her everything, but maybe it was just a one-way street. Clearly Ema hadn't been equally forthcoming.

How could she not tell me that she had a freakin' boyfriend?

Then again, had I told her about Rachel and me, about how there just might be something more between us?

No.

Why not? If Ema was just my friend—if it didn't matter that she was a girl or whatever—why wouldn't I tell her about Rachel?

"You okay?" Uncle Myron asked.

We were on the plane now, crammed next to each other in the last row. We are both tall, and the legroom in coach is designed for someone about two feet shorter.

"I'm fine," I said.

"So now what?" Uncle Myron asked.

"What do you mean?"

"You asked me to help get your father's grave exhumed, right?"

"Right."

Uncle Myron tried to shrug, but the seat was too small for it. “So now that we’ve done that, what’s your next step?”

I had wondered that myself, of course. “I don’t know yet.”

• • •

As soon as we landed, I called Ema. No answer. I tried Rachel’s phone. No answer. I texted them both that I was back in New Jersey. I placed a call to the hospital again, trying to get through to Spoon’s room, but the operator wouldn’t patch the call through.

“No calls allowed to that room,” the operator explained.

I didn’t like that.

We had landed on time, which meant that I could still make basketball practice. I had missed the past few days because of this trip. That would set me back with the team, and it worried me a little. I hadn’t actually practiced with the varsity, and I knew that I would be way behind.

Kasselton High, my new school, has a varsity and junior varsity team. The varsity is for juniors and seniors. Freshmen and sophomores play JV, and so far, in Coach Grady’s dozen years of coaching the Kasselton Camels, he has never had a freshman or sophomore on the varsity.

Humble-brag alert: I, a lowly sophomore, have been invited to try out for the varsity team.

I couldn’t wait to get on the court, but as Uncle Myron pulled his car to a stop in front of the school, I felt the butterflies start flying around my stomach. Myron must have seen the look on my face.

“You nervous?”

“What, me?” I shook my head firmly. “No.”

Uncle Myron put his hand on my shoulder. “It may take a while to warm up after a long flight,” he went on, “but once you get on the court and the ball is in your hand—”

“Right, thanks,” I said, not really wanting to hear it.

It wasn’t worrying about my performance that stirred those butterflies.

It was my teammates. In short, they all hated me.

None of the seniors and juniors liked the idea of a lowly sophomore crashing their party.

I could hear laughter coming from the locker room, but as soon as I pushed open the door, all sound stopped as though someone had flicked a switch. Troy Taylor, the senior captain, glared at me. To put it mildly, Troy and I had issues. I looked away and opened a locker.

“Not there,” Troy said.

“What?”

“This row is for lettermen.”

Everybody else was in this row. I looked at the other guys. Some had their heads lowered, tying their shoes too carefully. Some glared with open hostility. I looked for Buck, Troy’s best friend and a total jerk, but he wasn’t there.

I waited for someone to stick up for me or, at least, comment. No one did. Troy smirked and made a shooing gesture in my direction with his hand. My face reddened in embarrassment. I wondered what I should do, whether I should fight or back down.

Not worth it, I decided.

I hated giving Troy the satisfaction, but I remembered something my father told me: Don’t win the battle and lose the war.

I took my stuff, moved into the next row, and changed into shorts and a reversible practice jersey. After I laced up my sneakers, I headed out to the gym. That sweet echo of dribbling basketballs calmed me a bit, but as soon as I opened the door, all dribbling stopped.

Oh, grow up.

There were four or five guys at each of three baskets. Troy shot at the one on the far right. His glare was already in place. I looked again for Buck—he was always with Troy, always following Troy’s lead—but he wasn’t here. I wondered whether Buck had gotten injured and, cruel as it sounded, I really hoped that was the case.

I looked toward the guys standing around the basket in the middle. If those faces were windows, they were all slammed shut with shades lowered. At the third basket, I spotted Brandon Foley, the team center and other captain. Brandon was the tallest kid on the team, six foot eight, and in the past, he had been the only one to acknowledge my existence. As I stepped toward him, he met my eye and gave his head a small shake.

Terrific.

The heck with it. I moved over to a basket in the far left corner and shot alone. My face burned. I let the burn sink deep inside of me. The burn was good. The burn would fuel my game and make me better. The burn would let me forget, for a few moments anyway, that I still didn't know what really happened to my father. The burn would let me forget—no, not really—that my friend Spoon was in the hospital and may never walk again and that it was all my fault.

Maybe that explained why all my potential teammates, even Brandon Foley, had turned on me. Maybe they too blamed me for what happened to the nerd that they all enjoyed bullying.

It didn't matter. Shoot, get the rebound, shoot. Stare at the rim, only the rim; never watch the ball in flight; feel the grooves on your fingertips. Shoot, *swish*, shoot, *swish*. Let the rest of the world fade away for a little while.

Do you have something like this in your life? Something you do or play that makes the entire world, at least for a little while, fade away? That was how basketball was. I could sometimes focus so hard that everything else ceased to exist. There was the ball. There was the hoop. Nothing else.

"Hey, hotshot."

The sound of Troy's voice knocked me out of my stupor. I looked around. The gym was empty.

"Team meeting for non-lettermen," Troy said. "Room one seventy-eight. Hurry."

"Where is that?"

Troy frowned. "You serious?"

"I'm new to the school, remember?"

"Lower level. Push through the metal doors. Hurry. Coach Grady hates when someone shows up late."

"Thanks."

I dropped the ball and hustled down the corridor. As I took the stairs down, a small niggling started at the back of my brain. It wondered how come Coach Grady would call a meeting so far from the gym. I wish that I had stopped there and listened to that niggling. But there was really no time. And what was I going to do anyway, run back upstairs and ask my buddy Troy for more details on the meeting?

So I ran down the corridor. There was no else in the halls. The echo of my sneakers slapping the linoleum sounded as loud as . . .
. . . as gunshots.

My head started spinning. Where exactly was I? The lower level was for senior classes. I had never been here before. But if my sense of direction was correct, I was pretty close to being right on top of where Spoon had been shot just a few days earlier.

I hurried my step.

Room 166. Then room 168. I was getting closer. 170, 172 . . .

Up ahead I saw the metal doors Troy had mentioned. I pushed through them. They closed behind me with a bang.

And locked me out.

I stopped and closed my eyes. There was no room 178. Practice was probably starting right now. I would have to go out the back, through the football field, and around to the front entrance in order to make my way to the gym.

I ran as fast as I could but it still took me nearly ten minutes to get back. My teammates were already doing the weave drill when I burst in through the door. Coach Grady was not pleased. He turned and snapped, “You’re late, Bolitar.”

“It isn’t my . . .”

I stopped. What exactly was I going to say here? Troy looked at me with that same stupid smirk. He knew. I had two choices. One, tell Coach Grady what really happened, in which case Coach Grady might or might not believe me, but either way I’d be forever labeled a tattletale. Or, two, keep my mouth shut.

“Sorry, Coach.”

But Coach Grady wasn’t done. “Being late to practice is disrespectful to both your teammates and your coaches.”

I nodded. “It won’t happen again.”

“You haven’t even made the team yet.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And this won’t help your cause.”

“I understand, sir. I’m really sorry.”

Coach Grady stared at me a beat too long. “Run three laps and then get on line. Troy?”

“Yes, Coach?”

“Where’s Buck?”

I would say that Buck was meaner than a snake, but that wouldn’t be nice to the snake.

“I don’t know, Coach. He didn’t pick up his cell.”

“Odd. He’s never missed a practice before. Okay, five-second-denial drill. Get into it.”

Practice didn’t get much better. Whenever we were working on plays, the guys would throw it at my feet, making it nearly impossible to catch. When we scrimmaged, they froze me out, never passing me the ball no matter how open I was. Of course, I got my share of rebounds. I scored twice off steals. But still. If your teammates freeze you out, there is only so much you can do.

And then, with just a minute left in practice, I saw a glorious opening.

I was covering Brandon Foley. He grabbed a rebound and threw a long outlet pass to Troy Taylor. Troy had been what we call “basket-hanging”—not playing defense and staying close to his own basket for easy points. Troy caught the ball and slowed down his dribble. He was taking his time, preparing for takeoff, revving himself up for a big-time slam dunk.

The other guys hung back, watching, waiting to see whether Troy threw it down with one hand or two, or whether he tried a reverse dunk or something trickier.

I didn’t.

I sprinted toward the basket with everything I had. Up ahead of me, Troy took off into the air. His hand was above the rim, palming the ball. He was maybe half a second away from dunking the ball through the hoop when I leapt up from behind him and swatted the ball away.

“What the—?” Troy shouted in surprise.

A completely clean block.

“Foul!” he yelled.

I said nothing, just jogged toward the bouncing ball.

“You fouled me!”

I picked up the ball. I had knocked it out of bounds. It was his team’s possession. My father had taught me that you let your game do the talking. You don’t yell at referees. You don’t trash-talk. You just play.

I handed Troy the ball. He snatched it away.

“He fouled me!” Troy shouted again.

“Take the ball out of bounds, Troy,” Coach Grady said. “Run the stack.”

“But—”

“It’s just a scrimmage. Let’s go. Ten seconds left.”

Troy didn’t like it. He muttered something under his breath. I ignored him and got ready. I covered Brandon Foley tightly. I knew that he was the first option on the stack. Troy would want to lob it over my head to Brandon. I wouldn’t let that happen.

Troy yelled, “Break!” and all the players started to move. I kept a forearm on Brandon, trying to time his jump. I had my back to the ball, my eyes on my man, guarding him closely.

Seconds ticked by.

If five seconds passed, we got the ball. It was getting pretty close to that. I sneaked a glance to see what Troy was about to do.

But he’d been waiting for me to do just that.

When I spotted the grin on Troy’s face, I knew that I had made yet another mistake. Troy had been hoping that curiosity would get the better of me. Without warning or hesitation, Troy whipped the ball right at my face.

There was no time to react. The ball landed hard against my nose like a giant fist. I staggered back. I saw stars. My eyes started to water. My head felt numb. I tried to stay standing, tried like hell not to give Troy the satisfaction of going down, but I couldn’t remain upright.

I dropped to one knee and cupped my nose in both hands.

Brandon put a hand on my shoulder. “You okay?”

Coach Grady blew the whistle. “What the heck was that?”

“Hey, I’m sorry,” Troy said, all nice and innocent. “I was trying to get the ball to Brandon.”

I shook Brandon’s hand off my shoulder. The pain was subsiding. The nose wasn’t broken. I stood as quickly as I could. My head reeled in protest, but I didn’t back down.

I blinked away the tears and met Troy’s eye. “Whose ball is it?” I asked in as calm a voice as I could muster.

Brandon said, “You sure you’re—”

“Off you,” Troy said. “It hit your face and went out of bounds.”

“Then your ball,” I said. “Let’s play.”

But right then, Coach Stashower, the assistant coach, hurried back into the gymnasium. He whispered something into Coach Grady's ear. Coach Grady's face lost color.

"Okay, that's it," Coach Grady said. "Practice is over. Take a lap and shower up."

I took the lap quickly and headed into my solo locker row. I grabbed my cell phone and checked the messages. Only one text—it was from Ema: **coming over after practice? let me know time.**

I quickly typed that practice had just ended and, yes, of course I'd be over.

After all, we had to find her missing "boyfriend."

There was still nothing from Rachel. I didn't know what to do about it. I was sure some "helpful" adult would say something like "give it time," but I hated that advice. I had blown it. Uncle Myron had warned me that even the ugliest truth was better than the prettiest of lies. I had listened to that advice. I had told Rachel the ugly truth about her mother's death.

Now, it seemed, she didn't want to see me again.

I thought about that. I thought about Spoon in that hospital bed. I thought about the ashes in my father's grave. I thought about my mother in rehab. I thought about basketball, about my dreams of finally playing on a real team and how, now that it had come true, all my teammates hated me.

I sat by my locker. Sweat dripped off me. I could hear my teammates making jokes and enjoying that easy, laughing friendship I had never really known. Emotionally drained, I stayed where I was. I decided that I'd wait it out. I'd let the rest of the team shower and get dressed, and then when everyone was gone, I'd get ready.

I just didn't have the strength to face them any more today.

Troy was in the middle of some long-winded story when Assistant Coach Stashower stuck his head in the door. "Troy? Coach wants to see you in his office."

"I'm just finishing up a joke—"

"Now, Troy."

Everyone made a friendly mocking "oooo" sound as Troy headed out. Then the rest of the guys showered and got dressed. I pretended to check my iPhone for important messages. Ten minutes passed. The guys started to

file out with back slaps, figuring out who would ride in whose car, figuring a time to meet up at the Heritage Diner and then hang out at whose house.

I'd thought that the entire team had left when Brandon Foley came around the corner and sat on the bench next to my locker.

"Tough practice," Brandon said.

I shrugged. "No big deal."

"Troy isn't really such a bad guy."

"Yeah," I said, "he's a real prince."

Brandon smiled at that one. I knew that Brandon Foley was one of the most popular kids in the school. He was president of the student council, president of the Key Club, president of the local chapter of the National Honor Society, and as I mentioned before, co-captain (with Troy) of the basketball team.

You know the type. Good guy, but he wants everyone to like him.

"You need to understand the situation," Brandon said.

"Uh-huh," I said.

"It's mild hazing," Brandon said. "You're the only sophomore."

It was a lot more than mild hazing, but I didn't see much point in continuing with this conversation.

"Mickey?"

"What?"

"You know that this team won the county championship last year, right?"

"Yes," I said.

"And that we were within one game of winning the states," Brandon continued. "Do you know how long it's been since Kasselton High actually won it?"

I did. The big win was memorialized all over the walls of the gym in the form of banners and retired jerseys. Twenty-five years ago, Uncle Myron, the school's all-time leading scorer and rebounder, led the Kasselton Camels to their only state championship. One of his teammates—the *second* leading scorer and *second* leading rebounder on that team—was none other than Edward Taylor, Troy's father. He was now the town sheriff.

Bad blood across two generations.

"What's your point?" I said.

“The point is, last year our team started five juniors, so we’re all back. The five of us have all played together since we were Biddy All-Stars in fifth grade. Troy, Buck, Alec, Damien, and me—we grew up together. We’ve been the starting five since we were eleven years old. This may not seem like a big deal to you.”

But it did seem like a big deal. I never had anything like that. My parents had lived overseas my entire life. We jumped from place to place, country to country, mostly in the Third World. We lived the life of nomads, backpacking, setting up tents, living in small villages. I had no idea what it was like to have friends like that. As I said before, Ema and Spoon were my best friends ever, and I had only known them a few weeks.

“So now,” Brandon said, in his calm, rational, mature voice, “the five of us are seniors. This will be our last year together. We will go off to college and never be on the same team again. We’ve been waiting for this moment pretty much our whole lives. And now, because of you, one of us won’t be a starter anymore.”

“You don’t know—”

Brandon held up a hand. “Please, Mickey, let’s not play humble. You know how good you are. I know how good you are. Troy has always been our leading scorer and best player. Soon it will be you. So he knows it too. You’ve been at this school, what, a few weeks. In that time, you’ve taken his girlfriend and soon you’ll have his spot on the team.”

He was talking about Rachel. I wanted to correct him—I hadn’t taken her away and she wasn’t my girlfriend—but maybe it was better to just stay quiet.

Brandon stood. “Give him time to get used to that, okay?”

“I didn’t steal his girlfriend,” I said.

So much for staying quiet.

“What?”

“Rachel broke it off with him before I ever got here.”

“That’s not the point.”

“Of course it is. And I can’t help it if I’m a better player than he is.”

“I didn’t say you could,” Brandon replied. “I’m just letting you know what’s going on.”

“I don’t care,” I said.

“Excuse me?”

“Troy is a jerk. You’re justifying his bullying behavior—not just of me, but of Ema and Spoon too. He’s been on my case since day one—before he ever saw me take a shot—and he just intentionally whipped a basketball at my face. So, sorry, Brandon, I’m not really in the mood to hear someone excuse his bullying.”

“I’m not excusing it.”

I stood up. “Yeah, you are. And you let it happen. You, the big co-captain and president of everything in this stupid school, just stood there today and let it happen.”

Brandon didn’t like that. “Look, Mickey, I came over here to help you.”

“You’re a little late, Brandon. And if your help is to justify why your old best friend hates me, I’m good, thanks. He’s the one you should be talking to, not me.”

Brandon looked down at me another moment or two. I wanted to take it back. He had been the only one to reach out a hand in friendship, and I had slapped it away. But I was also angry and tired and jet-lagged and just sick of all the crap that kept piling on me. I didn’t want to hear about Troy’s problems. I had enough on my own.

Still, I ended up saying, “Brandon, I didn’t mean—”

“See you around.”

He turned and left without another word.

Fine.

I really had nothing to say to him anyway. I was finally alone. I got undressed and headed into the shower. Have you ever been alone in a locker room? Every sound echoes like it’s been miked up. I turned on the water and stepped under the wonderfully harsh spray. I took my time, letting the water pound on my back and head, closing my eyes and breathing deeply.

Calm down, I told myself.

I had just gotten out of the shower when I heard the locker room door burst open. I peeked around the corner.

It was Troy.

He didn’t see me. I stayed where I was. He collapsed onto the bench in front of his locker. His face fell into his hands. I heard a sound, a sound like . . .

Troy was crying!

For a moment I thought that maybe Coach Grady had bawled him out for his behavior today. Maybe Coach had seen how Troy had punked me with that fake meeting and whipped the ball into my face, and that was why he had called him into his office.

But I would soon learn that this had nothing to do with me.

The locker room door opened up again. It was Coach Stashower.

“You got your things, Troy?”

Troy sniffled and wiped the tears off his face with his forearm. “It’s a lie, you know.”

“We heard you.”

“I’m being set up.”

“Either way, I’m supposed to stay with you while you clean out your locker.”

“Now?”

“Now, Troy. It all has to go.”

Troy looked as though he was about to protest and then thought better of it. He opened his locker. He took out his bag and angrily stuffed everything into it. Everything. Sneakers, clothes, loose change. His shampoo. His cologne (cologne?). Even, ugh, an old photograph of Troy with his arm around Rachel in her cheerleading uniform that he’d taped to the inside of the locker door.

He jammed it all into his gym bag.

What the heck was going on?

“I’ll escort you out,” Coach Stashower said in a firm voice when Troy was done.

“No need,” Troy said. He stormed toward the door and flung it open. “It’s a lie. All of it.”

Then Troy was gone.

CHAPTER 7

I should have felt elated. My big enemy was apparently off the team. But I didn't. I felt confused and a little lost. Then again, that seemed to be my permanent status lately. I was at my best when I didn't have to think too much—either when I was on the court or when I had a specific task.

So what was my next task?

Help Ema find her missing boyfriend, I guess.

I walked up the long driveway and crossed the expansive front grounds. I'd barely put my fingertip on the doorbell in front of Ema's enormous mansion when the door swung slowly open.

"Master Mickey. Welcome."

It was Niles, the family butler, speaking with an accent so pronounced, it had to be fake. He wore a tuxedo or tails or something like that. His posture was ramrod straight. He arched one eyebrow.

Ema ran to the door. "Cut that out, Niles."

"Sorry, madam."

Ema rolled her eyes. "He's been watching a lot of British television."

"Oh," I said, though I wasn't sure I got it.

It was funny watching the two of them standing there. Both wore black, but that was where the similarities ended. Niles wore formal wear. Ema was in full goth mode—black clothes, jet-black hair, black lipstick, white makeup. She had silver studs going all the way up her ears, a pierced eyebrow, and one skull ring on each hand.

As we headed down the stairs, I couldn't help but stare at the movie posters. They all featured films starring the gorgeous Angelica Wyatt. Some were headshots. Some were full body. Sometimes she was alone. Sometimes she was with some guy. On the bottom step, there was one for that romantic comedy she did with Matt Damon last year.

Only a handful of people knew that Angelica Wyatt—yes, *the* Angelica Wyatt—was Ema's mom.

"So tell me what happened in California," Ema said.

We sat on oversize beanbag chairs. I told her everything. When I was done, Ema said, "Maybe it was your father's wish."

"What? Being cremated?"

"Right, a lot of people choose that," Ema said. "It's a possibility, right?"

I thought about it. We had traveled all over the world. Most foreign cultures—most cultures my father admired—preferred cremation to burial. I remembered that my father once bemoaned the "waste" of good land, land that could have been used to grow crops, because it was being used as a graveyard.

Could he have told Mom he wanted to be cremated?

I thought some more. Then I said, "No."

"You're sure?"

"If Dad had wanted to be cremated, he wouldn't then want to be buried too. He'd choose one or the other."

Ema nodded. "But it was your mother's signature on the form?"

"Yes."

"So?"

"So I need to ask her about it. The problem is, she's not allowed visitors in rehab right now. She's going through withdrawal."

"How much longer?"

"I don't know." I looked at Ema. Yes, she was interested, but I knew what she was doing. For some reason, she was asking all these questions to stall. "So tell me about your missing boyfriend."

"Before I do," Ema said, "I wanted to show you something."

"Okay."

She started pulling up her shirt.

"Uh," I said, because I'm good with words.

"Relax, perv. I want to show you a tattoo."

“Uh,” I said again.

“You’ll see why.”

Ema was loaded up with tattoos. This helped cultivate her bad-girl image. She wore them almost like a fence, warning people to stay back. Yes, I know a lot of people have tattoos, but Ema was only a high school freshman. Many of the kids were intimidated that a girl so young could have so many. How did she get her parents’ permission?

I had wondered that myself.

But more recently I learned the simple truth: The tattoos were temporary. She had a friend named Agent at a tattoo parlor called Tattoos While U Wait. Agent liked to try out designs before putting them on someone in a permanent way. He used Ema’s skin as a practice canvas.

Ema turned her back to me. “Look.”

There, in the center of her back, was a familiar image to Ema, Spoon, Rachel, and me.

A butterfly. More specifically, the Tisiphone *Abeona* butterfly.

That image haunted us. I had seen it on a grave behind Bat Lady’s house. I had seen it on Rachel’s hospital room door. I had seen it in an old picture of hippies from the sixties. I had even seen the image of that butterfly in an old photograph of the famous Lizzy Sobek, the young girl who led children to safety during the Holocaust. I saw it atop my father’s “maybe” grave, on the back of a photograph in Bat Lady’s basement, even in a tattoo parlor.

“You told me about that,” I said.

“I know. But I went back to have it redone. You know. Have Agent make it bright or change it. The tattoos usually wear off after a few weeks.”

I felt a small chill ripple across my back. “But?”

“But he couldn’t.”

I knew the answer but I asked anyway. “Why?”

“It’s permanent,” Ema said. “Agent said he doesn’t know how that happened. But the butterfly is there. For good.”

I said nothing.

“What’s going on, Mickey?”

“I don’t know.”

We sat there in silence. I finally broke it. “Tell me about your missing boyfriend.”

For a second or two, she didn't move. She swallowed, blinked a few times, and then stared at the floor. "*Boyfriend* may be putting it a little too strongly."

I waited.

"Mickey?"

"What?"

Ema started twisting the skull ring on her right hand. "You have to promise me something."

Her body language was all wrong. Ema was about confidence. She was big and confident and didn't care who noticed. She was comfortable in her own skin. Now, all of a sudden, that confidence was gone.

"Okay," I said.

"You have to promise you won't make fun of me."

"Are you serious?"

She just looked at me.

"Okay, okay, I promise. It's odd, that's all."

"What's odd?" she asked.

"This promise. I thought you didn't care what people think of you."

"I don't," Ema said. "I care what *you* think of me."

A second passed. Then another. Then I said, "Oh," because I'm really, really good with words. It was, of course, a dumb comment on my part—the stuff about her not caring. Everyone cares what people think. Some just hide it better.

"So tell me," I said.

"I met a guy in a chat room," Ema said.

I blinked once. Then I said, "You hang out in chat rooms?"

"You promised."

"I'm not making fun."

"You're judging," she said. "That's just as bad."

"I'm not. I'm just surprised, that's all."

"It's not like you think," Ema said. "See, I've been helping my mom with her social networking. She's clueless. So is her manager and her agent and her personal assistant—whatever. So I set some promotional stuff up for her—Twitter, Facebook, you know the deal. And now I watch it for her."

"Okay," I said.

“Anyway, in this chat room, I met this guy.”

I just looked at her.

“What?” she said.

“Nothing.”

“You’re judging again.”

“I’m just sitting here,” I said, spreading my hands. “If you see something more on my face, that’s more about you than me.”

“Right, sure.”

“I’m just surprised, okay? What kind of chat room was this anyway?”

“It’s for Angelica Wyatt fans.”

I tried sooo hard to keep my face expressionless.

“There you go again!” she shouted.

“Stop looking at my face and tell me what happened. You’re in an Angelica Wyatt chat room. You start talking to a guy. Am I right so far?”

Ema looked sheepish. “Yeah.”

“Are you using an alias?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Why would I? No one knows I’m Angelica Wyatt’s daughter.”

Not even me until I followed her from school last week. In school, Ema was the subject of much speculation. Every school, I’m told, has that one kid who seems to come out of the woods to school every day. No one knows where he or she lives. No one has been to his or her house. Rumors start—as they did about Ema. She lived in a cabin in the woods, some speculated. Her father abused her maybe. He sold drugs. Something.

Ema actually encouraged those rumors to hide the truth: She was the daughter of a world-famous movie star.

“I use my own name in the chat room,” Ema said, “so I can be just another fan.”

“Okay, go on.”

“So anyway, I started chatting with this guy. Then we started e-mailing and texting, that kind of thing.” Her face turned red. “He told me about his life. He told me he used to live in Europe but they had moved to the United States last year. We talked about books and movies and feelings. It . . . it got pretty intimate.”

My face twisted into a grimace.

“Ew, gross,” Ema snapped. “Not that kind of intimate!”

“I didn’t say—”

“Stop, okay? And never play poker, Mickey. You’d be terrible at it. I mean, we *talked*. We really talked and opened up. At first, okay, I figured that maybe this guy was a fake, you know? Like I was being played.”

“A prank,” I said. “Catfished.”

“Right. I mean, you know me. I don’t trust easily. But as time went on . . .” Ema’s eyes lit up. “It was weird, but we both changed. Especially him. He might have started out playing some kind of game, but he became real. I can’t explain it.”

I nodded, trying to move her along. “So you two got close.”

“Yes.”

“You felt like he was starting to open up to you.”

“Yes. A few days ago, he said that he had something really important to tell me. That he had to confess something. I figured, uh-oh, here we go. He’s really an eleven-year-old girl or he’s married and thirty-eight. Something like that.”

“But that wasn’t it?”

Ema shook her head. “No.”

“So what was his big secret?”

“He ended up saying, forget it, it’s no big deal,” Ema said. She slid a little closer to me. “Don’t you see? He chickened out. I can’t explain this well. I’m summing up hundreds of texts and conversations. It was like something scared him from telling me the truth.”

“You’re right,” I said.

“I am?”

I nodded. “You’re not explaining this well.”

Ema punched me in the arm. “Just listen, okay?”

“Okay.”

“Jared and I finally set up a meet.”

“Jared? His name is Jared?”

“Oh, now you’re going to make fun of his name?”

I held up both hands.

“He lives in Connecticut. About two hours from here. So we agreed to meet at the Kasselton Mall. Jared had just gotten his license and could drive down. He said that he had to tell me something really important, something

he could only tell me in person. He said that once we met, I'd understand everything."

"Understand everything about what?"

"About him. About us."

I was lost, but I just said, "Okay. So then what?"

"Then . . ." Ema stopped, shrugged. "Nothing."

"What do you mean, nothing?"

"What do you think I mean?" she snapped. "That's it. I went to the Kasselton Mall. I waited exactly where we said we'd meet—in that back corner of Ruby Tuesday's. But he never showed. I waited one hour. Then two. Then . . . all day, okay? I sat there all day."

"Jared never showed?"

"You got it."

"So what did you do then?" I asked.

"I texted him. But he didn't answer. I e-mailed him. Same thing. I went into our chat room, but he didn't come back. I even checked his Facebook page, but there was nothing there. It was like he had suddenly vanished into thin air."

Ema typed something onto her laptop and then turned it to me. It was a Facebook profile for a boy named Jared Lowell. I took one look at his profile picture and without thinking said, "You were catfished."

"What?"

The guy in the profile picture was ridiculously good-looking. I don't mean everyday-high-school-quarterback good-looking. I mean TV-hunk, fronting-a-hot-boy-band good-looking.

"Forget it," I said.

Ema was angry now. "Why did you say that?"

"Forget it, okay?"

"No, why did you say that I was catfished when you saw his picture? It's because he's cute, right?"

"What? No." But my words sounded weak even in my own ears.

"You don't think a guy who looks like that could ever go for a girl who looks like me, right?"

"That's not it at all," I sorta-lied.

"If I were Rachel Caldwell, you'd have no trouble believing it—"

“It isn’t that, Ema. But, I mean, look at him. Come on. If I told you I was having an online relationship with a girl I met in a chat room and, when you saw her picture, she looked like a famous swimsuit model, what would you think?”

“I’d believe you,” she said. But now it was her voice that sounded weak.

“Right,” I said. “Sure. And then when I was supposed to meet Miss Swimsuit Model in person, she suddenly vanished—would you still believe it?”

“Yes,” she said a little too firmly.

I put my hands on her shoulders. “You’re my best friend, Ema. You’re the best friend I’ve ever had.”

She looked down, her face reddening in embarrassment.

“I could lie to you and tell you that this all sounds on the up-and-up,” I said. “But what kind of friend does that? I’m not saying your relationship with Jared isn’t real. But if I don’t have the courage to tell you how it looks, who will?”

That stopped her. Ema kept her face down. “So you think, what, it’s a prank?”

“Maybe,” I said. “That’s all. Maybe it’s just a joke.”

She looked up at me. “A joke?”

“A cruel one, but yeah, maybe.”

“Well, ha-ha.” Ema shook her head. “Mickey, think about it. Let’s say it was a prank. Let’s say it was the mean kids in school. Like Troy or Buck, right? Let’s say they set this whole thing up.”

I waited.

Ema spread her arms. “Where’s the payoff?”

I had no answer to that.

“They would have let me know, right? They would have mocked me. They would have rubbed it in my face or put the intimate conversations online. They’d let the world know what a fool I was, wouldn’t they?”

A tear slid down her cheek.

“Why would Jared the prankster just vanish without having the last word?”

I swallowed. “I don’t know,” I said.

“Mickey?”

“What?”

“It is easy to make fun of these relationships. I used to do it too. But think about it. When it is just in writing like this, when it is just texts or e-mails, just your words and nothing else, it is actually more real. It doesn’t matter what you look like or what table you sit at during lunch. It doesn’t matter if you play quarterback or head up the chess club. All of that becomes irrelevant. It is just the two of you and your intelligence and your feelings. Do you see?”

“I guess,” I admitted.

“Listen to me, Mickey. Look at my eyes and really listen.”

I did. I looked into those eyes, and for a moment, I felt happily lost. I trusted those eyes. I believed in them.

“I know,” Ema said. “Don’t ask me how. But I know. We have to do this—even if you think I’m crazy.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s not up to us,” Ema said.

“Huh? Of course it is.”

Ema shook her head. “These things come to us, Mickey. It’s bigger than we are.”

“What do you mean?”

“You know what I mean.”

“What, you think this is Abeona?”

She moved closer to me so we could share the laptop. I smelled her perfume. It was something new, something different. I had smelled it before, but couldn’t place it. She pulled up Jared’s page again. “There has only been one new photograph added since Jared disappeared . . .”

When I saw the screen, I nearly gasped out loud.

There, on Jared Lowell’s page, was a photograph of a butterfly.

Again, to be more specific, the Tisiphone Abeona.

“We have no choice,” Ema said. “We need to find him.”

We sat there for another moment, staring at that butterfly. I smelled her perfume again and felt a small rush. I looked at her. She looked at me. Our eyes met. Nothing was said. Nothing needed to be said.

And then my cell phone rang.

Our eye contact broke as though it were a dry twig. Ema looked away. I looked toward the caller ID on my phone. The number was blocked.

“Hello?”

An adult male said, “Is this Mickey Bolitar?”

The voice was grave and serious and maybe there was a small quake of fear in it.

“Yes, this is he,” I said.

“This is Mr. Spindel, Arthur’s father.”

It took me a second to place the name, but when I did, I felt my pulse quicken. I always called Arthur Spindel “Spoon.” His father, the man on the phone, was the head custodian at Kasselton High School—and Spoon’s father.

“Is Spoon okay?” I said quickly.

Mr. Spindel didn’t answer that directly. “Do you know where Emma Beaumont is?”

Emma was Ema. “She’s right next to me.”

“Could you please both come to the hospital?”

“Of course. When?”

“As soon as possible,” Mr. Spindel said, and then he hung up.

CHAPTER 8

Niles drove us to Saint Barnabas Medical Center. He dropped us off at the front door. We sprinted to the reception desk in the lobby.

“Fifth floor,” the receptionist said to us. “The elevator is on your right. Look for the signs for the ICU.”

ICU. Spoon was still in the Intensive Care Unit. I felt my eyes well up, but I forced the tears back down.

We hurried to the elevator. I pressed the button repeatedly, as if that would somehow tell the elevator that we were in a rush. It took too long to arrive. We leapt in and of course three other people did too, all pushing for floors lower than ours. I wanted to yell at them to cut it out.

When we finally reached the fifth floor, Mr. Spindel was waiting for us. He was wearing the beige janitor uniform he wore at school, the words MR. SPINDEL stenciled on the right chest pocket. He was a wiry man with big hands and usually an easygoing way about him. There was no smile now.

“This way,” Mr. Spindel said.

As we followed him, Ema asked, “How is Spoo—I mean, Arthur?”

“No change.”

No change. The words hushed the corridor. When we last saw him, Spoon had no feeling in his legs. He was paralyzed below the waist.

No change.

Down the corridor I saw Mrs. Spindel sitting in a chair. I flashed to the first time I had seen her when I dropped Spoon off at his house a few weeks ago. She had greeted her son at the door with such pure joy. Her entire face

had lit up as she hugged him. Now it was like someone had extinguished that light. Her cheeks were sunken. Her hair seemed grayer.

Mrs. Spindel gave me a baleful look. The last time I was here, she had told me in no uncertain terms that what happened to her beloved son was my fault. Clearly her opinion had not changed.

“My wife doesn’t think this is a good idea,” Mr. Spindel explained.

There was no need to comment on that.

We approached a big door.

“I’ll wait out here,” Mr. Spindel said. “You two go in.”

I pushed the heavy door open slowly. Spoon was sitting up in bed. There were tubes and machines and beeping noises. He looked tiny in that big hospital bed, this little skinny kid with the big glasses lost among all this horror.

When Spoon saw us, his face broke into a huge smile. For a second everything else in the room disappeared. There was just that big smile on the face of that tiny, doofy kid.

“Did you know,” Spoon began, “that Babe Ruth wore a cabbage leaf under his baseball cap?”

Ema and I just stood there.

“For real,” Spoon went on. “He’d wet it on hot days and it kept him cool. He changed it every two innings.”

I couldn’t help it. I lost it. I ran over to him and tried so hard not to cry. I’m not a crier by nature. But as I rushed over to Spoon, as I swept him as gently as I could into my arms, I could feel the tears push through my eyelids.

“Mickey?” Spoon said tentatively. “What the . . .”

I squeezed my eyes shut and tried to hold it. I needed to be strong right now. I needed to be strong for Spoon. I was his big, tough friend. I remembered on the very first day we met how he’d said that I was Shrek to his Donkey. I was his protector.

And I had failed him.

It was no use. I started sobbing.

Spoon said, “Mickey?”

“I’m so sorry,” I said through the sobs. “I’m so sorry.”

“For what?”

I just shook my head and held on to him.

“For what?” Spoon asked again. “You didn’t shoot me, did you?”

“No.”

“I didn’t think so. So what are you sorry about?”

I let him go. I checked his face to see if he was just playing with me, but he looked genuinely baffled.

“It’s still my fault,” I said.

Spoon frowned. “How on earth do you figure that?”

“Are you serious?”

“As a heart attack,” Spoon said. He started laughing. “Man, I always wanted to use that line. Serious as a heart attack, except it really isn’t funny, I mean, not in here. Mr. Costo down the hall, he had a heart attack. That’s why he’s in the hospital. I met his wife. Nice lady. She went to elementary school with Tippi Hedren. You know, the old actress? From *The Birds*? Isn’t that something?”

I just looked at him. He smiled again.

“It’s okay, Mickey.”

I shook my head. “I got you involved in all this.”

Spoon pushed the glasses up his nose. “Really?”

I looked at Ema. She shrugged. I turned back to Spoon. “Are you putting me on?”

“No,” Spoon said. “And no offense, Mickey, but you’re kinda sounding full of yourself.”

“What?”

Spoon’s eyes met mine. “You’re not that powerful, Mickey. You didn’t make me do anything. I made my own choices. I’m my own man.” He looked at Ema and winked. “That’s why the ladies dig me, am I right?”

Ema rolled her eyes. “Don’t make me punch you.”

Spoon laughed at that. I just stood there.

“You weren’t the only one the Bat Lady chose,” Spoon said. “Sure, you’re our leader, I guess. But we’re a team. We are all a part of Abeona—you, me, Ema. Rachel too. Can we walk away from it? Well, I can’t. I mean, I really can’t. My legs aren’t working right now. But even if they were, I don’t think I could. And that has nothing to do with you, Mickey. You’re not to blame.”

“Wow,” I said.

“What?”

“You’re kind of making sense.”

Spoon arched an eyebrow. “I’m a constant surprise.” Another wink for Ema. “Another reason the ladies dig me.”

Ema made a fist and showed it to him. Spoon howled with laughter. When he finished, he spread his arms and said, “So?”

“So?” I repeated.

“So why do you think I told my dad I had to see you? We rescue kids. That doesn’t stop because I got hurt. So who do we need to rescue now?”

“Just rest,” I said. “You need to concentrate on getting better.”

Spoon frowned at me and looked toward Ema.

“A guy I met in a chat room,” Ema said to him.

“A boyfriend?” Spoon asked.

“Sort of.”

Spoon shook his head. “I get shot and you’re already on to a new guy?”

“I will hurt you,” Ema said.

Spoon pushed the glasses back up his nose again. “Tell me about him,” he said.

So she did. Spoon nodded. He never showed doubt. He never judged. He just listened. It made me wonder who indeed was the leader of this group. Ema was just finishing up when a nurse came in and told us it was time to leave.

“I have my laptop,” Spoon said. “I’ll get us everything I can on this Jared Lowell.”

CHAPTER 9

I decided to walk home because I needed to see something.

I cut across Northfield Avenue and tried to clear my head. I made a right on the next corner. I had a destination in mind, even if, in a sense, it no longer existed.

Bat Lady's house.

I know that I shouldn't refer to her as that anymore. The Bat Lady was the name the town kids had given to the creepy, crazy old lady who lives in the creepy, crazy old house, the one that children whispered about and made up stories about and even genuinely feared.

The Bat Lady was not crazy. Or maybe she was, but either way, she was not what any of those kids ever imagined. In a way, the reality behind Bat Lady was even scarier.

The decrepit house that had stood for more than a century was barely more than ashes now. It had been burned down last week. I had been in the house at the time. I had barely escaped with my life. I still didn't know why that man had tried to burn me alive. I had only met him once before.

He was the paramedic who told me that my dad was dead.

I stopped in front of the remains of the house. There was yellow tape surrounding it. I wondered whether that meant that this was a crime scene, if the authorities had figured out that this had been a case of arson, not merely fire.

I flashed back to the day it all started, just a few weeks ago. I had been walking to my new high school, minding my own business, strolling right

past this very spot when the front door of the scary old house creaked open.

The Bat Lady had called out to me. “Mickey?”

I had never seen her before. I had no idea how she knew my name.

She pointed a bony finger at me and said the words that changed my life: “Your father isn’t dead. He’s very much alive.”

And then she vanished back inside.

I had thought that his casket would hold the answer. Instead it just led to more questions.

I stared at the remains of the house. Signs reading CONDEMNED and PRIVATE PROPERTY—NO TRESPASSING were everywhere.

So now what?

There were secret tunnels under the house. I wondered whether the fire had affected them. I doubted it. I tried to remember the last time—well, the only time—I had been in them. I knew that the entrance was by the garage, deep in the woods. I knew that they led to the house. I knew that there were other paths underground, a whole maze of them maybe.

Tunnels that had been closed off to me.

Was that all gone now? Or would there be clues down there?

I thought about working my way into the garage and searching for the tunnels, but, no, I couldn’t do that right now. For one thing, there were the various KEEP OUT–type signs. But more than that, there were neighbors out and about. A man mowed his lawn. A woman walked her dog. Two girls were drawing on a driveway with chalk. I debated circling around back, trying to find another way into those woods behind Bat Lady’s property, when I heard a sweet sound that always got my attention.

The tunnels would have to wait until the street was quiet.

Besides, someone was dribbling a basketball.

The sound called out to me. It worked like a mating call or something. I was drawn to it. The sound was soothing, engaging, comforting, inviting. If someone is dribbling a basketball and you want to join him, you are always welcome. It is part of the code. You could shoot around with someone or rebound for them or take winners. You didn’t have to know each other. You didn’t have to be the same age or the same sex or play at the same level. All that vanished when someone was dribbling a basketball.

As I drew closer, I could tell from the sound that it was someone practicing alone. Two dribbles. Shot. Two dribbles. Shot. By the speed of it,

I'd say that the person was practicing low post moves. The sounds were too close together for outside shots. If you play the game, you'll know what I mean.

When I turned the corner, I saw my team co-captain Brandon Foley taking hook shots in the key. I stopped and watched for a few seconds. He took three from the left, then three from the right, then back to the left. He made nearly every one. His face was coated in sweat. He was concentrating, focused, completely lost in the simple bliss of this drill, but there was something more here, something deeper and not so joyful.

"Hey," I called out.

Brandon stopped and turned toward me. Now I could see that it wasn't sweat coating his face.

It was tears.

"What are you doing here?" he asked me.

"I was just walking by when I heard the dribbling," I said. "Look, I'm sorry about what I said after practice. I appreciate you reaching out like that."

He turned toward the basket and started up his drill again. "Forget it."

I let him shoot for another minute. There was no letup, no slowing down.

"What's wrong?" I asked him.

Brandon dribbled outside and took a shot. The ball swished through the basket and started to roll away. Neither one of us went for it.

"It's all falling apart," Brandon said.

"What is?"

"All these years, all the different teams we played on together, all leading up to this season and now . . ." Brandon shrugged. "It's all gone."

I said nothing. I figured that this had something to do with what I had witnessed with Troy in the locker room, but I didn't want to let on that I'd seen.

"Everything was going so well," Brandon said. "We had all worked so hard and prepared and then, today, your very first day on the team and . . ."

He didn't finish the thought. He didn't have to. His glare said it all.

"Wait, are you blaming me?"

Brandon turned back toward the basket and started shooting again.

"So what happened?" I asked him.

“Troy and Buck,” he said.

My two sworn enemies.

“What about them?”

“They’re both off the team.”

“What?”

Brandon nodded. “That’s right. Troy was our leading scorer. Buck was our best defender. Both gone.”

“Why?” I asked.

“What do you care?” He took another hook shot. “Heck, you’re probably happy. It clears two spots for you.”

I moved toward the basket. I grabbed the ball and held on to it. “I wanted to earn a spot,” I said. “I don’t want to get it because other guys drop out.”

Brandon looked off for a second. He let loose a deep breath and wiped his face with his forearm. “I’m sorry,” he said, his voice softening. “I’m snapping at you, but I know this isn’t your fault.”

“So what happened?”

“Buck moved.”

“What? Now?”

Brandon nodded. “See, his parents got divorced when we were all in eighth grade. He’s lived with his father and brother, but now his parents decided he should be with his mom.”

“Just like that?” I asked. “During his senior year of high school?”

“I guess. I don’t know. I never heard a hint of it until today.”

Part of me was pleased, of course. I hated Buck, and Buck hated me. But this somehow didn’t feel right. “So that’s why Buck wasn’t at practice,” I said.

“Yeah.”

“And Troy?”

Brandon put up his right hand, inviting me to throw him the pass. I did. He grabbed the ball in his outstretched hand, took one dribble, and dunked it hard through the hoop.

“He’s been suspended for the season,” Brandon said.

“For what?”

“Steroids.”

My mouth dropped open in surprise. “He failed a drug test?”

“Yes.”

“Wow,” I said, but now I understood what I had witnessed in the locker room. Coach Grady must have just given him the news.

“Troy swears he’s never taken anything like that,” Brandon said. “He says he’s being set up.”

I remembered hearing him claim that in the locker room. “How could that be?”

“I don’t know.”

“And who would do that?” I asked. “I mean, the testing all seems pretty much on the up-and-up.”

“I know,” Brandon said.

Brandon threw me the ball. I took a shot. “Do you believe Troy?” I asked him.

Brandon grabbed the rebound, threw me the ball. I took another shot, waiting for his answer. He seemed to be chewing over the question.

“Troy is a lot of things,” he said. “I know he can be, well, rough around the edges. I even know that he can be a bully. But a liar? A drug cheat?”

We both stopped and looked at each other.

“Yeah,” Brandon said, “I know it’s crazy, but I believe Troy.”

CHAPTER 10

I wanted to go back to the Bat Lady's house that night, but here was the problem: I had too much homework. I'd been blowing it off for days now, and if I didn't start working on the essay for history and study for the math quiz, I'd be in huge trouble. I turned off my mobile phone, sat at the kitchen table, and got to work.

First thing Tuesday morning, I had history with my favorite teacher, Mrs. Friedman. Rachel's desk was empty. I didn't know what to think, but it really wasn't a huge surprise. There had been a shooting at her house. Her mother ended up dead, and Rachel ended up hospitalized with a bullet wound. The wound ended up being minor. Physically she was okay. Mentally, well, that was another story.

I had been the one to tell Rachel the truth. I had been warned by her father not to, but Uncle Myron had given me other advice, warning me that if you lie, it never leaves the room. It haunts the relationship forever. That made sense to me, so I ended up listening to Myron.

Rachel and I hadn't communicated since, and yet if I had to do it all again . . . I don't know.

The vibe in the school cafeteria was decidedly somber today. Ema and I sat at our usual table in what is often dubbed "Loserville." Our table could sit twelve, but today there were just the two of us. Usually we were three, and staring at the spot where Spoon normally sat made my chest hurt.

"I'm worried about him too," Ema said. "But he wouldn't want us moping around about it."

I nodded. I had met Spoon in this very cafeteria. He had walked up to me and offered me his spoon for reasons I still didn't get. In my mind I had started thinking of him as "that spoon kid," which had been shortened to Spoon. Spoon loved the nickname and insisted that we use it always and forever. If someone called him Arthur now, he ignored them.

The tables with the kids we deem more popular for whatever dumb reasons were usually an active beehive of varsity jackets, blond highlights, loud voices, big laughs, and enthusiastic high fives. But not today. Troy was still there, at the head of the table as usual, but he was quiet. The rest of the table followed his mood. In fact, it seemed as though the whole cafeteria were in silent mourning over the recent fate of their fallen leader.

"It's so quiet in here," Ema said.

She and I were always on the same wavelength.

"Too quiet," I said, arching a joking eyebrow.

I wasn't suicidal enough to smile or laugh out loud, but I didn't want to be a hypocrite. I hated Troy with pretty good reason, and that wasn't about to change over this. Yes, I understood how painful it must be to lose a season of basketball, especially now, in your last year of playing with your buddies. But then again, some of us had never had a steady group of buddies to play with. Some of us hadn't been handed those opportunities, just to toss them away.

I didn't feel sorry for him.

Troy had cheated by taking PEDs—performance-enhancing drugs. I didn't buy Brandon's defense. That was what every athlete said when they were caught—it was a mistake, it was a fix, it wasn't me. I would probably admire Troy more if he just admitted it. Whatever. It wasn't my business.

Troy's table was usually full, but the seat next to his, the one where Buck always sat, was empty. I could usually count on Buck to be staring me down, mouthing that I was a "dead man," emphasizing the point by making a slashing motion across his neck with his finger. Buck would then make fun of Ema in some cruel way, call her "fugly" or moo at her, a classic insecure bully idiot. I wouldn't miss him either.

But I did find it odd.

Troy and Buck had been best friends since elementary school. Suddenly, within a few days of one another, Troy had been caught up in a drug scandal and Buck had moved away.

I lowered my head to start eating when I realized that the room had suddenly gone even quieter if possible, as though everyone had decided to hold their breath at the same time.

Then I heard Ema said, “Whoa.”

I lifted my head and felt the familiar jolt.

Rachel Caldwell had entered the cafeteria.

The silence was for a few reasons. One, this was her first return to school since the shooting that had left her mother dead and Rachel wounded. That had been our last . . . I don’t know what the word is . . . case, I guess, for the Abeona Shelter. We had solved it, but the answer remained a carefully guarded secret.

I hadn’t even told Ema.

I felt bad about that. Ema and Spoon had risked their lives and done everything anyone could have asked. They were my best friends and I hated the idea of keeping secrets from them, especially Ema, but in this case, the secret wasn’t mine to tell. It was Rachel’s. If I tell Ema, I betray Rachel. But then again, by not telling Ema . . .

In the end, I hoped and believed that Ema would understand. But I could be wrong about that.

I had not seen Rachel since the day I flew to California, when I showed up at her door and blew her world apart.

Reason Two for the cafeteria silence: Rachel was a popular girl. More to the point, she was captain of the cheerleading team, the hottest girl in school, the girl everyone talked about—you get the drift. People paid attention to a girl like that.

Reason Three: Rachel and Troy had been—I start gagging when I even think of it—an item. Rachel made it clear to me that she’d been young and dumb and that it was way, *way* over, though maybe she should make it a little clearer to Troy.

Still, I couldn’t help but notice that she wasn’t coming over to say hi to Ema or me. She was heading for Troy’s table. She took Buck’s seat—the one next to him—and forced up a sad smile for Troy.

My face felt hot.

“Stop it,” Ema whispered to me.

“What?”

She just frowned at me and shook her head. “Troy was just kicked off the basketball team. She has to show some kind of support for him, don’t you think?”

I didn’t. But that wasn’t the point. Rachel hadn’t so much as glanced in our direction. Ema wouldn’t understand why. But I did. Uncle Myron had warned me that there would be a price for telling the truth, but how had he put it?

The ugliest truth is still better than the prettiest of lies.

She was avoiding me. I don’t know what advice someone would give me about that. *Give her time*, probably. I had done that already. Not a lot of time. But enough. Besides, I had learned that “giving time” often meant “time to fester.”

I needed to confront Rachel. The sooner, the better.

CHAPTER 11

I made it my business to walk past Rachel's locker between classes, hoping to catch her there. Finally, with only one period left in the day, I found her, but she was far from alone. Rachel's locker was surrounded by cheerleaders and jocks and a potpourri of popular kids, all welcoming her back and showing concern.

I didn't know them. They didn't know me.

I was the new kid and so there was some natural curiosity about me. My height also drew attention, I think, and maybe I was starting to get a rep for my basketball. I had, of course, lost a lot of popularity cred by choosing to hang out with Ema and Spoon. So now maybe I was less a curiosity and more an oddity.

Rachel saw me approach and gave a slow shake of her head. I got the meaning. *Stay away*. I should have respected that, nodded in return and moved on my way.

I didn't. I stood there and mouthed the word, *When?*

Her reply was a slammed locker. Rachel shot me one last dagger, turned, and strolled away.

Terrific.

My final period today was health with Mr. Nacht, a class that couldn't be more snooze worthy if it included Benadryl. When classes ended, I hurried back to Rachel's locker. No sign of her. I went to my own. I had basketball practice in half an hour, but it would be good to get there early and work on

my shooting. I reached into my locker and grabbed my phone. There was a message from Spoon: **Got some information on Jared. Stop by tonight.**

There was another buzz. Again it was Spoon, the boy who lived for irrelevant factoids: **Porcupines float in water.**

Good to know, in case I was ever tempted to rescue a water-drenched porcupine.

I was first changed and out on the gym floor. I shot around, enjoying the solo echo of one man dribbling and shooting. The other guys started to sputter out of the locker room. None chose to shoot with me. I was hardly surprised. Normally there was laughter, horsing around, banter, whatever. Not today. The gym was silent as a tomb—or the cafeteria today. The only sounds came from the bouncing balls.

At four o'clock, Coach Grady blew the whistle and shouted for everyone to take a seat. Brandon and some guy I hadn't met yet pulled out the rickety accordion-like stands. We all climbed up a step or two and found a place to sit.

Coach Grady looked as though he'd aged ten years since last practice. He paced for a few moments. We all sat and watched him. Behind him, Coach Stashower held a clipboard and waited.

"We have our work cut out for us," Coach Grady said. "As most of you know by now, Troy has been suspended from the team. He has the right to appeal, which he has taken, but in the meantime he will not be allowed to practice or play with the team. Troy had been our co-captain. During his absence, which will last the entire season if it's not overturned on appeal—and frankly I don't know anyone who has ever won an appeal—Brandon will serve as our solo captain."

All eyes turned to Brandon. Brandon kept his head up, his face set.

"On top of that, Buck's family has decided that he would be better off living with his mother, so he won't be with us for the season. That means two seniors, both starters and leaders on last year's team, won't be playing with us this season. I don't think I have to tell you what a big blow this is for our program."

Coach Grady adjusted the cap on his head and let loose a long sigh. "But victory often comes out of adversity. We can give up, or we can rise to the challenge. For many of you, there is an opportunity here to step up. For us

as a team, we can either let these setbacks tear us to shreds—or make us more cohesive. We can either come together or come apart.”

He put his foot up on the lowest bench, leaned onto his knee, and took a few seconds to scan our faces. “I believe in all of you. I believe in this team. And I believe we can still achieve great things this season.”

Absolute silence.

“Okay, boys, take three laps and start the three-man weave. Let’s go.”

He clapped his hands, and we were off.

The practice did not go well. If I’d hoped that Troy being vanquished would help me, I was very sadly mistaken. If anything, the rest of the guys seemed extra angry with me, as if it were my fault. They froze me out. They threw passes at my feet. Someone hit me with a dirty elbow. I fought through it and played hard, but part of me wanted to just quit.

When practice ended, I was a sweaty mess, but I didn’t want to hang around these guys one second longer than necessary. I was about to head out when Brandon ran up behind me.

“Mickey?”

I turned toward him.

“We need to talk,” he said.

“Uh, okay. Now?”

He came a little closer. “Let’s wait for the other guys to leave. I don’t want them to see us. Shower, get dressed, take your time.”

So I did. Again everyone avoided me, except to give me death stares. Half an hour later, Brandon and I were the only ones left in the locker room.

“So talk,” I said to him.

Brandon looked left, then right. “Not here,” he whispered. “Follow me.”

“Where?”

“Just follow me.”

He held open the door, inviting me out into the still corridor. I didn’t like it. The players and coaches were gone now. So were all the teachers. Our footsteps echoed down hallway.

“You get what’s going on, right?” Brandon said.

“About?”

“About why the guys on the team are mad at you.”

“No.”

“Think about it.”

I did. I still didn't get it.

"You join the team," Brandon said, "and suddenly Troy comes up with a positive drug test."

"So?" Then: "Wait, are you saying people think I had something to do with it?"

Brandon nodded. "We've all known Troy for years. He's a lot of things. But he's not a drug cheat."

"So, what, they think I spiked his urine or something?"

Brandon stopped and looked at me. "Did you?"

"Are you out of your mind?"

"Did you?"

"Of course not. Seriously, even if I wanted to, how would I?"

Brandon shrugged. "You have access to the school."

"What are you talking about?"

"People know you're friends with the janitor's weird kid."

He meant Spoon. I was about to defend Spoon, to snap back that Spoon wasn't weird, but then I remembered something: Spoon was weird.

Wonderfully so. But he was weird.

"He's got keys, right? He could sneak you into places."

"To alter drug tests?" I said. "That's insane."

"Is it? Heck, you guys were in here with drug dealers last week. The janitor's kid got shot, right?"

"Right, but—"

"There's been a lot of crazy stuff happening in this town since you moved in," Brandon said, "and somehow, Mickey, you seem to always be in the middle of it."

We were in a dark corridor now. I didn't like it. I didn't like any of this.

"Where are we going, Brandon?"

"Almost there."

When we reached the end of the corridor, I heard a familiar voice say, "Hello, Mickey. Thanks for coming."

I turned.

It was Troy.

CHAPTER 12

I took two steps back and debated how to play this.

I could make a run for it. I could stand and fight. I wasn't afraid. I was pretty good with my fists, but then again it was two against one, at the very least. There might be more of them somewhere nearby. I could also go after one, make a quick strike, and sprint down the corridor.

But neither Troy nor Brandon moved toward me. They just stood there, both looking at each other nervously, then back at me.

"What's going on?" I asked.

"We need to talk," Brandon said. "That's all. Just talk."

"Are you going to start up again with that nonsense about me setting up Troy?"

It was Troy who replied. "No. I didn't believe it for a second."

I looked at him. For the first time since we'd met, Troy Taylor wasn't looking at me with naked hostility. He wasn't telling me I was a dead man. He wasn't mooing at Ema. He looked like a real, live human being.

"I need your help, Mickey."

"Me?"

Brandon stepped forward. "All that stuff I said before. About how you could break into the school. About all that stuff you've been involved with."

"What about it?"

Troy and Brandon exchanged another look. "You're good at stuff like that."

"What are you talking about?"

“Come on, Mickey,” Troy said. “My dad is the chief of police here, remember?”

Boy, did I know. Chief Taylor probably hated me more than his son did.

“He told me how you were doing your own investigation when that girl Ashley disappeared. He told me that you drove a car and broke into a nightclub down in Newark. I know you helped Rachel figure out who shot her and her mom. You were actually here, in this school, when those bad guys shot up the place, and you came out on the winning end.”

Winning end, I thought. Spoon lay partially paralyzed in the hospital and Rachel was devastated. Some winning end.

“I still don’t see your point,” I said.

Troy looked at Brandon. Brandon nodded at him to continue.

“You’re like some kind of kid detective,” Troy said. “I don’t know. But I need your help.”

“Help with what?”

“I need you to help me prove that I didn’t take steroids.”

“Me?” I glanced at Brandon and then back at Troy. “You’re kidding, right?”

Brandon said, “Just hear him out.”

“I didn’t do it, Mickey. I swear.”

I still couldn’t believe what I was hearing. “First off, Troy, I don’t believe you. But even if I did, you’ve been nothing but a bully to me since I arrived. You pick on my friends. You tried to hurt me at practice.”

“I know that. And I’m sorry.”

“That’s not good enough.”

“Mickey?”

“What?”

Troy spread his arms. “We’re teammates, right?”

I said nothing.

“This is what teammates do. We help each other. Like family. And, yeah, Mickey, maybe you’ll be the star this year. Maybe you’ll even score more points than me. I don’t know. But you know the team will have a better chance of winning the state championship if I’m on it.”

I shuffled my feet. “This isn’t my business,” I said.

“Mickey, look at me for a second. Okay? Just look at me.”

I did.

“I’m sorry,” Troy said again. “I was getting on your case because you’re new to the school and you’re only a sophomore and, okay, maybe I was jealous. I mean, you just came to this school and you’re this hotshot basketball star and, well, already my girl is spending more time with you than me.”

I was about to comment on that, but Brandon just shook his head at me, signaling for me to let it go.

“So here I am,” Troy said, “asking for your help.”

I wasn’t sure how to respond. I took a step back. “As you pointed out, your father is the chief of police,” I said. “Let him help you.”

“He can’t do this.”

“Sure he can.”

“I need someone with your skills. I need someone who gets it, who’s part of the team.”

I almost bought into it right then—the idea of team. But then I remembered it all. Troy’s threats, the way he bullied Spoon and grabbed Ema’s laptop, how he had set me up and almost got me thrown off the team, the way he yelled “moooo” and cackled whenever Ema walked by him in the cafeteria.

“I’m sorry,” Troy repeated. He stuck out his hand. “Can’t we start again?”

“I have to go,” I said.

Brandon said, “Mickey . . .”

“This isn’t my battle, Brandon. You kept saying how I get in the middle of these things. This time I’m staying out of it.”

I turned and started down the corridor.

CHAPTER 13

Brandon caught up to me when I reached the door. “Cold,” he said.

“It’s like sixty degrees out,” I said.

“Ha, ha. I meant the way you just dissed Troy.”

“You’re joking, right? You were there when he whipped the ball at my face. How long ago was that? Oh, that’s right. Last practice.”

“He was jealous. He explained that to you. Don’t you get that at all? You’ve spent your life traveling around. You don’t know what it’s like when you’re in a town like this. Things are just expected of you. And for Troy, well, he’s been the best basketball player in town. His dad’s the chief of police. He had this great girlfriend—and yeah, yeah, I know, you didn’t take her away—but suddenly someone comes in and threatens everything he’s worked for. Don’t you have any compassion at all?”

I thought about that. “He was mean to my friends.”

“Because they’re an extension of you.”

Again with the justifying. “And seriously, Brandon, what can I do anyway? His dad should help him.”

“Troy’s dad can’t help.”

“Why not?”

“Because,” Brandon said, “his dad doesn’t believe him.”

That surprised me. “What?”

“That’s right. Even his own father has abandoned him on this. He thinks his son cheated. Chief Taylor wants to see if Troy can get back on the team in other ways, you know, come clean, say it’s a first offense. But Troy

doesn't want that. He wants his name cleared. He wants the truth to come out."

I didn't know what to say.

"There's something else you should consider too," Brandon said.

"What?"

"Your teammates, like it or not, think you had something to do with Troy's suspension."

"But even Troy said he knew I had nothing to do with it."

"And maybe he'll tell the other guys that. Or maybe he won't. Maybe he'll wonder why you rejected his peace offering and slapped his hand away. Maybe he'll start to think the rest of the guys are right about you."

I said nothing.

"You see what I'm saying?"

"I think so. It sounds like blackmail. Help Troy or look like the guy who set him up."

"That's putting it too strongly," Brandon said. "More like, help Troy and look like the kind of teammate other guys want to play with. Look like the kind of teammate other guys respect and look up to and want to be around. Look like the kind of teammate who stands up for his captain, even when it's hard."

"Wow," I said.

"What?"

"No wonder you're always elected class president."

Brandon smiled and put his hand on my shoulder. "Help him, Mickey. Help yourself. Help your team."

And because I'm a complete idiot, I told him that I would.

CHAPTER 14

Ema did not take it well.

“Are you out of your mind?” Ema asked.

We were entering the lobby of the hospital, heading up to Spoon’s room.

“If you’d just listen a second—”

“Oh, I heard you. You want to help Troy Taylor! Troy Freakin’ Taylor!” She spread her arms. “What, are there no serial killers who need our help?”

“Forget it. I’ll do it on my own, okay?”

“No, not okay. We work together. That’s part of this. And we have more pressing problems, thank you very much.”

“You mean your”—I tried to say it without sounding sarcastic—“boyfriend?”

“Are you being sarcastic?”

Like I said, I tried.

“It’d be a waste of time anyway,” Ema said.

“Why?”

“Because you know Troy’s guilty.”

“A lot of people don’t think so.”

“Like who? Brandon? Look, Brandon is a nice guy, but he’s always been under Troy’s spell.”

“I may need to do it,” I said.

“Need?”

“To help me.”

“Help you how?”

“To help get my teammates to see me in a new light.”

She blinked. “Are you serious?”

“They hate me, Ema. All of them.”

“And you think helping Troy will do what exactly? Make all the jocks think you’re cool?”

“No,” I said.

“Because if you want to be cool, your best bet is to jettison the uncool people around you.”

“Will you stop it?”

We got into the elevator.

“I still don’t understand,” Ema said. “What do you want out of this?”

I opened my mouth, closed it, tried again. There was no point. She wouldn’t understand. “Do you get what basketball means to me?”

Ema met my gaze and moved closer. I felt something warm pass over me. “Yes, of course.”

“You can’t be an outsider on a team,” I said. “You can’t be the loner sitting at a table in the corner.”

“You mean like I do?”

“No, I mean like *we* do. Basketball is a team sport. That’s the beauty of it. I want to be a part of that. It’s why I wanted my parents to settle in one place. So I could play on a real team. So I could know what that’s like—being part of a team and all that goes along with it.”

I stopped because the emotion came suddenly. Suppose I hadn’t wanted that. Suppose I had just kept my mouth shut. Would my dad be alive (or with me)? Would my mom have stayed off drugs?

Had my desire to be part of a real team destroyed everything?

“I know that’s what you want, Mickey,” Ema said in the softest voice. “I get that. But helping Troy Taylor—”

“Will show everyone that I’m willing to do *anything* to be a good teammate.”

Ema shook her head, but she didn’t argue.

We reached the door to Spoon’s hospital room. No one was around, so I knocked lightly and pushed it open. I heard Spoon’s voice:

“Did you know that ants stretch when they wake up in the morning?”

I smiled. Ah, Spoon.

“Oh, and I mean ant like the insect. Not aunts like my aunt Tessie. She never stretches.”

I wondered what nurse or doctor he was regaling with his random facts, but when I saw who it was, I pulled up short.

It was Rachel.

Spoon smiled at us from the bed. “Great,” he said. “We’re all here.”

Rachel greeted Ema with a brief hug but only nodded at me and turned away. Ema looked at me, puzzled. Rachel was usually much friendlier with me, but of course, Ema didn’t know about our last conversation, when I told her the truth about her mother’s death.

“Four of us,” Spoon said. “Do you know that the number four is considered unlucky in many East Asian cultures? That’s because the word for four sounds like the word for death.”

He pushed his glasses up his nose.

“Spooky, right?”

Ema sighed and said, “Did you find anything about Jared Lowell?”

Before he could answer, the door behind us opened. A nurse in pink hospital scrubs stepped into the room. She did not look pleased to see us. “What is this?”

Spoon spread his arms. “My posse.”

“Your what?”

“My posse. These are my peeps, my crew, my homies—”

“Are they immediate family?”

“More than immediate family,” Spoon said. “They’re my posse, my peeps, my crew, my—”

The nurse was having none of it. “You’re only allowed one non-family visitor at a time, Arthur. You know that.”

Spoon frowned. “But I had two here yesterday.”

“Then someone was breaking the rules. I need two of you to leave this room immediately.”

We all looked at one another, not sure what to do. Spoon took care of it.

“I will talk to all three of you separately, but—and I hope you lovely ladies don’t consider this in any way to be sexist—Mickey and I first need to have a man-to-man talk.”

He winked at me. I tried not to frown. Ema did not look pleased. I got that. She was the one most interested in finding Jared Lowell.

“I can wait,” I said. “You and Ema can go first.”

Spoon shook his head. “Man to man. It’s important.”

He looked at me hard, trying to send a message. I noticed now that the call button was near his right hand. I wondered whether he had pressed it—whether that was the reason why the nurse had suddenly appeared.

The nurse clapped her hands. “Okay, ladies, you heard the man. Let’s leave them alone for their *bro* talk.” She gestured toward the door, escorting Ema and Rachel out into the corridor.

Spoon and I were alone.

“Did you call for the nurse?” I asked.

“Yep.”

“Why?”

“I wanted to show you what I found before we tell Ema.”

“Why? He’s a fake, right? Jared Lowell.”

“No. Her boyfriend, Jared, is very much real. Maybe too real.”

“What do you mean?”

Spoon pressed the button next to his bed so that he could sit more upright. “Jared Lowell’s residence is in Massachusetts, a small place called Adiona Island.”

“Lie Number One,” I said.

“What?”

“He told Ema that he lives in Connecticut.”

“Well, he does. Sorta. That’s why I used the word *residence*. Jared Lowell actually lives at the Farnsworth School, a fancy-shmancy prep school in Connecticut. All boys. They have to wear a jacket and tie every day. Could you imagine? That would put a crimp in my fashion statements, I think. I’m normally known in school as a pretty natty dresser, right?”

“Natty?”

“Sharp. I’m a sharp dresser, don’t you think?”

To keep Spoon on track, I said, “I do.”

“Anyway, Jared Lowell is seventeen years old and a senior. He does indeed have a Facebook page, but he almost never used it—not until recently anyway. After he, uh, disappeared or whatever, he took down almost all the photographs on his page. You know this already, right?”

“I guess,” I said.

“So have you seen any pictures of him?” Spoon asked.

“Just the profile picture.”

“So you probably don’t know that he’s tall.”

I didn’t see the relevance. “Okay.”

Spoon looked me in the eye. “He’s six-four.”

My height. “Okay,” I said again.

“Or that he plays basketball. In fact, he’s the leading scorer for his high school team, averaging nineteen points per game.”

I nodded and said, “Okay.”

“Or that his father’s dead, so he only has his mother.”

I stopped saying okay.

“Did you notice that Jared kinda looks like you?”

“He doesn’t look like me,” I said.

“He’s more pretty-boy. You’re more what the ladies would call rugged. But, yeah, Mickey, there are similarities. Lots of them.”

“So what’s your point, Spoon?”

“No point. I just find it interesting that Ema fell for a guy who could be, well, you.”

I said nothing.

“Mickey?”

“What do you want me to say here, Spoon? We’re both tall and play basketball. I don’t attend a fancy-shmancy private school. I’m only a sophomore, not a senior. I don’t live with my mother—she’s in rehab, remember?”

Spoon nodded. “That’s all true.”

“And this is still feeling like a catfish to me. You were able to independently confirm that Jared Lowell is real?”

“Yes. There are articles on his ball playing, complete with photographs and statistics. He’s real.”

“I’m still thinking this is a catfish,” I said. “All the stuff you said, okay, there are similarities. So someone—maybe Troy or Buck or some other toad—found this guy online and made up a fake Facebook page—”

“No,” Spoon said.

“How’s that?”

“The Facebook page has existed for four years. It’s a little hard to explain, but the original setup ISP originated on Adiona Island—where he

lives. He also used it. Not a lot. He isn't a big Facebook guy. But it was in use and the posts are obviously not fake."

"So Jared Lowell is real?"

"Yes."

"And his Facebook page is his?"

"Yes."

I pointed my palms to the sky. "So where is he now?"

"Normally I would say there is no big mystery."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning there are no articles or indications that he's missing. I assume he's at school. If he was hurt or vanished, I think there would be something online, don't you?"

"I do," I said.

"All we know for certain is that he's not currently using his Facebook page and has stopped communicating with Ema. Normally I would say that this doesn't concern us. For whatever reason, he decided that Ema wasn't for him and, well, was less than a gentleman about informing her."

"Normally."

"Right."

"So why isn't this 'normally'?"

"Because nothing about us is normal, Mickey," Spoon said. "You know that."

I did.

"And while many photographs were taken down from his Facebook page, only one has been added since he stopped talking to Ema."

I nodded. "The Abeona butterfly."

"Right."

I sighed. "So we need to see this through."

"Right again. Unless."

"Unless what?"

"We have our enemies, don't we, Mickey?"

I thought about the sandy-haired paramedic with the green eyes. He had taken my father away from the car accident. He had set Bat Lady's house—Abeona's headquarters—on fire while I was inside.

"We do," I said.

"He could be another. Jared Lowell. This could be a setup."

Spoon could be right. But it gave me another idea. “Do you remember this?”

I handed him the old black-and-white photograph. The man dressed in the Nazi uniform was, I’d been told at first, the Butcher of Lodz, a monstrous war criminal who had killed hundreds, maybe thousands, during World War II. But it wasn’t. At least not entirely.

The face belonged to the paramedic with the sandy hair and green eyes.

For a long time, I had been bewildered by this—how could a Nazi from World War II have been the paramedic who wheeled away my dad? But sometimes the simplest answer is so close to us, we can’t see.

The paramedic’s face had been Photoshopped onto the Butcher of Lodz’s body by the Bat Lady.

I still had no idea who he was.

“Sure,” Spoon said. “What about it?”

I put my finger right on the picture’s face. “You know he’s not really the Butcher of Lodz, right?”

“Right.”

“Is there any way you can figure out who he really is?”

Spoon studied the picture. He started to nod slowly. “I think maybe I can. Let me work on it, okay?”

“Okay.”

Spoon put the photograph in the drawer next to his bed. “You better let Ema in now. What do you think I should tell her?”

“The truth,” I said.

I looked down at him, in that bed, paralyzed below the waist. I was blocking on that. It was the only way to stay upright. But suddenly I felt the tears building again. Spoon looked up at me and then turned away.

“Arthur?” I said.

“Don’t call me that,” he said.

“Spoon?”

“What?”

I swallowed. “How are you? Really.”

He gave me the big smile. “Terrific!”

I just looked at him and waited. The smile faded away.

“To tell the truth,” Spoon said, “I’m a little scared.”

“Yeah,” I said. “I get that.”

Silence.

“Mickey?”

“Yeah?”

“After I talk to the girls, do you think you can hang in my room for a while?”

I managed not to cry. “For as long as you’d like.”

CHAPTER 15

Ema went in next, leaving Rachel and me alone for the first time since I knocked on the door and told her the truth about her mother's death. For a few minutes we avoided each other's gaze. I stood there feeling ridiculously awkward, shuffling my feet, casually fake whistling. I had no idea why I was fake whistling, but that's what I was doing. I bounced on my toes. My hands felt really big and like I had no place to put them. I jammed them in my pockets.

Rachel was beautiful. It was as simple as that. Physically she was the complete package. Everyone thought so. At our school, she was "that" girl, but I've often found that the "high school hot," while obviously attractive, can often have looks that are somewhat blank or standard or like some kind of formula—that when you are universally considered hot, that hotness can also be bland.

That wasn't the case here. Rachel's beauty was, well, interesting.

I moved toward her hesitantly, half expecting her to shake her head for me to go away again. She smelled great, like honeysuckle and lilacs.

"Hey," I said, because I'm smooth like that.

"Hey."

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"Fine."

Silence.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"It's not your fault."

“Your father thought it’d be better if you didn’t know the truth. He didn’t want me to tell you what happened to your mom.”

Rachel tilted her head. “So why did you?”

I hadn’t expected her to ask that. I guess that I expected to get credit for being honest, but her eyes were pinning me down, wanting an answer.

“It was something my uncle said.”

“Your uncle Myron?”

“Yes.”

“What?”

“It was about lies. Even when they’re for someone’s good.”

“Go on.”

“I don’t remember his exact words, but he said that it might be a good lie, it might be a bad lie, but either way, the lie would always be in the room with us.”

Rachel nodded. I wanted to ask more. I wanted to know how her father had reacted, but it wasn’t my place to ask. We stood in silence for a few more seconds. I broke it:

“I was surprised to see you here. Did Spoon call you?”

“No,” she said.

“So how did you know to come?”

“This was in my locker.”

Rachel handed me an essay she had written for Mrs. Friedman’s history class. She had gotten an A with a comment in Mrs. Friedman’s script saying, “Great job!” But that wasn’t the important thing. The important thing was the image someone had stamped onto the top right-hand corner of the first page.

The Abeona butterfly.

“Did you do this?” she asked.

I sighed. “You know better.”

“So who was it?”

“I don’t know. And yet we all know.”

Rachel shook her head. “You sound like a fortune cookie.” She looked toward Spoon’s door. “So there’s another kid who’s missing.”

“Maybe. What did Spoon tell you before we got here?”

“That Thomas Jefferson had a pet mockingbird and when he was alone in his study, he’d close the door and let the bird fly around.”

I smiled.

“So who’s missing?”

“A guy Ema met online. His name is Jared Lowell.”

I filled her in on what I knew. When I finished, I said, “Can I ask you a personal question?”

“Sure.”

“Are you and Troy . . . ?”

“No. You of all people should understand.”

“Understand what?”

“He loves basketball like *you* love basketball.”

And it had been taken away from him in his final year. Troy was maybe good enough to play college, get a scholarship even, and now it was all gone.

“Do you think he did it?” I asked.

“Took steroids?”

“Yeah,” I said. “He says he was set up.”

“Is that possible?” Rachel asked.

“I don’t know. You know him”—ugh—“well. I want your opinion.”

“Why do you care what I think?” she asked.

“Because he asked me to investigate it.”

Rachel’s eyes widened. “What?”

“Troy wants me to prove that the test was wrong or fixed or whatever.”

“You?”

“My reaction exactly.”

She shook her head. “Wow.”

“So?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “I never knew him to cheat. He was overly competitive, for sure. He has a lot of pressure on him and, yeah, maybe he’s been acting out more. But a cheater? I don’t think so.”

Ema came out and Rachel went in. A few minutes later, Rachel exited the room. We were all going to leave together, but I told them that I needed to stay behind with Spoon for a while. They understood and started home.

I entered Spoon’s room nervously, but he immediately put me at ease. We laughed a lot. Life was funny, I thought. The most poignant moments always ended up being the most mixed. I had a great time with Spoon even

while my heart broke. Laughter can be more intense when it's blended with tears.

It was getting late, but I didn't want to leave him. I texted Uncle Myron and explained what was going on. He understood: **I'll pick you up when you're done. Don't worry about the hour.**

I told him not to wait up—that I'd walk—and then I turned off the phone before he could argue. Time passed. Spoon put a sitcom on the television. At some point, I realized that he had stopped speaking, which was something that never happened. I turned toward him.

Spoon had fallen asleep.

I watched him. Lots of emotions passed through me. I didn't stop or analyze them. I just let them flow through. I felt my eyes grow heavy. I decided that I would close them for a minute, no more, and then I would make sure Spoon was okay and head home. That was my plan anyway. Rest the eyes for a second.

I don't know how much time passed. It may have been an hour. It may have been more. I was dreaming about the car accident that killed my father, the sound of brakes screeching, the crunch of impact, the way my body flew. I saw my father lying on the ground, bleeding, his eyes closed, and that paramedic, that damn paramedic with the sandy-blond hair and green eyes, meeting my eye . . .

A hand touched my shoulder.

"Mickey?"

My blood went cold. I jerked awake. I was back in Spoon's hospital room. It was dark. He was asleep. The hand was still on my shoulder. I turned in my chair and looked up at the silhouette of the nurse. Except of course it wasn't a nurse. I knew that the moment I heard her voice.

It was the Bat Lady.

CHAPTER 16

I had a million questions to ask her.

Bat Lady kept her hand on my shoulder. The hand was bony with liver spots and thick veins. I knew that she had to be well into her eighties by now. She looked it. And I knew that I should stop thinking of her as Bat Lady. Her real name was Elizabeth “Lizzy” Sobek. Her whole family died during the Holocaust, but young Lizzy had saved a group of children from certain death in a Polish concentration camp. After that, the famous teen became a resistance fighter against the Nazi occupation.

No one heard from her again.

Most history books believe that she’d been killed during World War II.

Most history books are wrong.

“Are you okay?” I asked her.

The last time I was in her house, the sandy-haired man with the green eyes burned it to the ground. I had not seen her since.

“I’m fine,” she said.

She loomed over me, looking larger and stronger than she had in the past. Maybe that was because she had traded in her tattered, long white nightgown for hospital scrubs. The gray hair that normally flowed down past her shoulders was tied into a bun.

She made her way toward the front of Spoon’s bed and checked his chart. Her face looked grim.

“Can’t you do something?” I asked. “He can’t walk.”

“I’m not a doctor, Mickey.”

“But can’t you . . . ?”

“No,” she said. She moved toward Spoon’s head. She reached down and smoothed back his hair. “I’m sorry.”

“That’s not good enough.”

“It never is.”

“It’s our fault,” I said.

“Perhaps.” She turned toward me. “We save many, but there is always a cost.”

I gestured toward the bed. “He shouldn’t be the one to pay for it.”

She almost smiled. “Do you want to lecture me about how life isn’t fair, Mickey?”

“No, ma’am.” I shifted in the chair. “Where have you been?”

“That’s not important.” She looked down at Spoon. “He’s meant for great things, you know.”

“So he’s going to be okay?”

“I didn’t say that.” She turned toward me. “My house is gone.”

“The paramedic. He burned it down.”

“I know.”

“He tried to kill me.”

She didn’t respond to that.

“I still don’t understand.” I opened up the drawer next to Spoon’s bed and pulled out the old black-and-white picture. “Why did you give me this?”

She didn’t respond to that either.

“You told me that it’s the Butcher of Lodz from World War Two,” I said, trying to control my anger. “But that’s not who it is at all. I mean, the body is, I guess. But the face . . . that’s the paramedic who told me that my dad was dead. Why did you give this to me?”

“The Butcher of Lodz killed my family,” she said.

“I know.”

“This man,” she said. “He is your Butcher.”

I shook my head. “So he’s, what, my enemy?”

She said nothing.

“And I still don’t get why you put his face on this body.”

“It was,” she said, “a test.”

“How so?”

“I wanted to see your reaction. I needed to see if you were on our side. Or his.”

“Wait, you’re not making any sense. Who is he?”

“The last time you were in my house, you went upstairs, yes?”

I nodded.

“You saw the Hall of the Rescued.”

“Is that what you call it?”

“You saw it?”

I had seen it. When I went up the stairs of the old house, the hallway had been blanketed with pictures of children and teenagers. Hundreds, thousands, maybe tens of thousands. They’d been everywhere, crawling up both walls, clinging to the ceiling. There were layers upon layers of them. Some were black and white. Some were color. There were so many of them, you couldn’t find the walls or the ceiling.

Only photographs of the children.

Missing children. Check that: rescued children.

“The pictures were burned in the fire,” I said.

“I know.”

“I still don’t get it,” I said. “What do the pictures have to do with the guy?”

“If you’d had the chance to study the hall closer,” she said, “you might have found a photograph of a sandy-haired little boy with green eyes.”

I frowned. “He was one of the children you rescued?”

“Not me,” she said.

“Then who?”

She just looked at me.

“My father?”

She didn’t answer. She didn’t have to.

“My father rescued this guy?” I opened my mouth but no words came out. I closed it and then tried again. “But now he’s my enemy?”

“He is,” she said slowly, “worse than that.”

“He set the fire. It nearly killed me.”

Again she just stood there.

“Did he kill my father?”

“I don’t know. You said he was there.”

I nodded. “He was the paramedic.”

“And he took away your father?”

“Yes.”

She turned and looked at Spoon again. “That is all I know.”

“What are you talking about?” I could hear the anger in my voice. “The first time I saw you, you stepped outside and told me point-blank that my father was alive. Don’t you remember?”

She nodded. “I do,” she said softly.

“Well, if you didn’t know, why did you say that?”

She closed her eyes. “When I heard about your father’s car accident, I cried. We get used to death and costs. I’ve explained that to you before. But your father had saved so many. Your mother too. They dedicated their lives to our cause and angered many bad people. But still, when I first heard about your father, I believed that it was just a tragic accident. I had no idea that Luther was involved.”

“Luther?” I said. “That’s his name?”

She took the photograph from my hand. “I should have known better, Mickey. Accidents happen, of course, but with people like us, odds are that there is something more nefarious at work. I was wrong.”

“What made you change your mind?” I asked.

She looked at me.

“What made you suspect this Luther guy was involved?”

The old lady smiled, and for a second, I could see the child that she once was. “You don’t believe in magic, do you, Mickey?”

Oh, please, I thought. “No.”

“Neither do I. I’ve seen too much suffering to believe in the superstitious. And yet . . .”

I waited. When she didn’t speak again, I tried a new avenue. “Who is this Luther? What’s his last name?”

“I don’t know.”

“How can you not know?”

She shrugged. “We worry about the rescue, not the name.”

“But my father rescued him?”

“Yes.”

“And then you thought—”

“That your father died in a car accident.”

“So what made you change your mind?” I asked again.

“You won’t believe it. I don’t believe it either. And yet I know what I know. I don’t believe in magic or superstition. But I believe that there are some things we cannot yet comprehend—that there are things beyond our capabilities to understand. Sometimes, explaining how the universe works is like teaching a lion to read. Reading is real. The lion is real. But he’s never going to read.”

I shook off the analogy and yet I got it. “So what happened?” I asked.

“My refrigerator broke.”

“Huh?”

“It’s an old refrigerator,” she said. “It hums so loudly. But I’ve had it a long time. I like it. Even the noise comforts me.”

I tried not to sigh.

“Miss Sobek?”

“Lizzy.”

“Pardon?”

“Call me Lizzy.”

“Okay, great. Lizzy, I was asking about this Luther guy and my father.”

“And I’m telling you. You need to be patient, Mickey.”

I said nothing.

“Where was I?”

“You loved your loud refrigerator,” I said, trying to keep the sarcasm out of my voice.

“Oh, right. Thank you. Yes, my refrigerator. I’ve had it since, oh, I don’t know. Many, many years.”

“Fascinating,” I said, because I couldn’t help it.

Lizzy ignored it. “One day, the refrigerator broke, so I called the repairman. This was, oh, I don’t know. Maybe two months ago.”

“Okay,” I said, just to keep her moving along.

“So he said that he would come between noon and five P.M. That’s how they do it, these repairmen. They don’t give you a specific time, like they used to. They give you a block of time. You’re supposed to sit and wait, but then again, I had no place to go.”

I wanted to pull the words out of her mouth, but I guess that she needed to go at her own pace.

“So anyway, at noon I came downstairs. I like to sit in the living room and listen to my old record player. I play it all day long. I know it’s funny

for an old lady, but I love the old rock. The Who. The Rolling Stones. I have *Pet Sounds* by the Beach Boys. Have you ever heard it?"

"Yes."

"Do you like it?"

"Very much."

"Me too. My favorite is HorsePower. Do you know them?"

I nodded. "They're my mother's favorite."

"I know." She smiled at me again. "But on that day, I wanted to be sure to hear the doorbell. I didn't want to miss the repairman. So I kept the music off. I made myself a cup of Earl Grey tea and sat at the kitchen table and waited for the repairman to arrive. It seemed to take forever."

"I know the feeling," I muttered.

"What?"

"Never mind. You were waiting for the repairman."

"Yes. And I fell asleep. Right there. Right at the kitchen table. I don't know why. I never nap during the day. But I was tired, I guess. Or maybe it was because the refrigerator was silent. Or that there was no music playing. I can't explain, but I fell asleep. And that's when I heard it."

"Heard what?"

"In my sleep. In my dream, I guess. I heard your father's voice."

I tried not to make a face. "In a dream?"

"Maybe."

"And, uh, what did he say?"

"I couldn't hear much. It was very muffled. But I knew it was his voice. I could make out the word *Luther*. That was about it. He sounded in trouble, though. There was panic in his voice. A knock on the door woke me up. The repairman was there."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "And this is why you thought my father was alive?"

"Yes."

"Because you heard a voice?"

"His voice."

"In your sleep?"

"Yes."

I didn't even know what to say to that.

"Mickey?"

“Yes.”

“You know about the fate of my family, of course. My mother. My father. My beloved brother.”

I nodded.

“They are all dead,” she said. “So I know.”

“Know what?”

“I know,” she said, her voice a low cackle, “that the dead never speak to me.”

Somewhere, way in the background, I heard hospital machines beeping.

“Not once,” she went on. “All those deaths, all those years, all those ghosts. But they never speak to me. You want to roll your eyes at the old lady hearing voices? I understand that too. But as I’ve learned, we can’t explain everything. Not yet anyway. I know what I heard. I heard your father. I heard him warn me about Luther.”

I just sat there.

“And now Luther is back, isn’t he? So maybe, just maybe, I’m not so crazy.”

Silence. For a few moments we just stayed there, not moving. Finally I spoke.

“Is that why you Photoshopped his head on that Nazi picture?” I asked.

“Trick photography. Yes.”

“You wanted to see my reaction? To see if I knew Luther?”

“Yes.”

“Did you think that, what, I was working with him?”

“I didn’t know. But he was there. You said that he took your father away.”

“He did,” I said. “But Dad rescued Luther, right?”

“Yes.”

“So why would this Luther guy want to hurt him?”

“Things go wrong, Mickey.” She looked at Spoon. The implication was obvious. “Just because you do right doesn’t mean that wrong won’t still find you.”

I felt a tear in my eye. “So what do I do now?”

“You’re already doing it. You have your assignment.”

“What, you mean this guy Ema met online?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“She will need to discover the truth. You have to help her.”

“Okay.”

“And, Mickey? We don’t always make the rescue.”

“What do you mean?”

“Your search. It may not end well.”

“Why do you—?”

The door behind us opened. As the nurse started to come in, Lizzy Sobek moved with a speed that defied her age. She blew through the door, muttering an excuse-me to the confused nurse, and vanished down the corridor. I started toward it, but the nurse blocked my exit.

“Excuse me,” she said to me, “but who was that?”

“Just another nurse,” I said, and pushed past her.

When I reached the corridor, I looked left, then right. Nothing.

The Bat Lady was gone.

CHAPTER 17

The next day, Ema and I were at our usual outcast lunch table. I was about to fill her in on Bat Lady's visit when I saw Ema's eyes widen and leave mine.

"What?"

Ema didn't reply. She was looking over my shoulder, and judging from the expression on her face, some horror movie zombie was slowly approaching me from behind, ready to pounce and sink his teeth into my flesh.

I slowly turned to see what had caused Ema's terror.

Troy Taylor was walking toward us.

He carried an overloaded lunch tray. Three cartons of milk, a sandwich the size of a throw pillow, a heaping pile of French fries, Jell-O, I don't even want to know what else. He walked with an ease and confidence that Ema and I would never have in this room.

"What the . . . ?" Ema whispered. "He's not planning on—"

Troy stopped in front of us. He flashed a smile that almost made me reach for sunglasses and said, "Hey, mind if I sit with you guys?"

Before we could overcome our surprise enough to reply, Troy dropped his tray with a heavy thud and pulled out a chair. He sat as though someone had cut his legs out from under him. Then he picked up his sandwich with both hands.

"So how are you guys doing?"

He took a huge bite and started to chew.

Ema looked at him as though he'd just dropped out of a horse's behind.
"What do you want?"

"Who said I want something?"

"Well, you don't normally sit here."

"I'm trying to broaden my horizons. Is that a problem?"

"You usually sit over there," Ema said, pointing at the "cool" table. "If you even so much as glance over here, it's usually to moo at me."

Troy put down his sandwich, wiped his hands on a napkin, and gave Ema the most solemn look I had ever seen on a teenager. "I wanted to apologize for that."

"Excuse me?"

"No, Ema—can I call you Ema? Or do you prefer Emma?"

Caught off guard, she said, "Uh, Ema is fine."

"Great, thanks. No, Ema, it is I who needs to be excused, not you. I was wrong."

"You were wrong every day?" Ema asked. "Every day since, oh, sixth grade or so?"

"I was, yes. I was horrible. I have nothing to say in my defense. Sure, I could blame Buck. You know that he was the leader of all that kind of stuff. Maybe I felt peer pressure, I don't know. You might think it's easy being at that table, being—yeah, I know how this sounds—one of the kings. But like Mrs. Friedman taught us in European History, 'Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.'"

Ema and I sat there, mouths agape.

"So maybe it's because Buck is gone now," Troy continued. "Maybe recent events are making me see things more clearly. But really, Ema, I want to apologize and try to start anew."

"You're kidding, right?"

Troy looked wounded. "I've never been more serious."

"You must think I'm an idiot."

"How so?"

"You're a user, Troy."

"Ema," I said.

Her head snapped toward me. "What? You're buying this?"

"No, but—"

“You’re being used, Mickey. He’s not here because he’s had some great epiphany or because Buck is gone. He’s here because he wants us to help him get off for failing a drug test.”

“Ema?”

It was Troy. She slowly turned her head toward him.

“You may be right,” he said.

“What?”

“I’m not claiming Mickey and I are going to be best friends,” he went on, “but we’re teammates. It’s a bond that’s hard to understand. We both want to win—and we want to win with our teammates by our side.”

“You did it, Troy. We both know you’re guilty.”

“Then the last thing I’d want to do is keep the whole mess front and center, right?” Troy said. “If I was guilty, I’d stay quiet. That’s what my old man wants me to do.”

That quieted Ema for a moment.

“I understand how you feel,” Troy said.

“No, you don’t,” Ema said. “How would you have reacted if I’d sat at your table? You’d probably start mooing or something.”

“That’s a good question,” he said with a nod. “It hurts to hear. But it’s a fair point.”

“So you fail a drug test and now you want us to believe that you’ve seen the light?”

Troy thought about it. “The truth is, I need Mickey’s help. You have no idea how hard that was to admit. Brandon really helped me see that. And, yeah, I know how this sounds, but maybe talking to Mickey, you know, face-to-face and all, maybe that’s what it was. It’s easy to hate at a distance. It’s not so easy to hate face-to-face, like this.”

Ema just frowned.

“But when I was talking to Mickey, I started thinking about everything. My whole life, I guess. Here was some guy I’ve been a total jerk to and he’s willing to help me. I’d have never done that. I’m being honest here. It made me think. It made me wonder about what kind of guy I am and what kind of guy I want to be. I took a long, hard look at myself. I don’t think I’ve ever done that before. Things have always come easy to me. Maybe I needed this, I don’t know. Either way, I took a long, hard look in the mirror—and I didn’t like what I saw.”

Troy stood and picked up his tray. “I don’t blame you, Ema. And I don’t expect to make amends in one day. Tiny steps. So if you won’t accept my apologies for all the horrible things I’ve said over the years—and you shouldn’t yet—please accept my apologies for barging in on you guys like this.” He gave me a nod and started on his way. “See you around.”

I almost called out to him, but I let it go. Ema didn’t reply either. She just lowered her head and started picking at her food.

“He’s full of it, you know.”

I didn’t say anything. I didn’t blame her. I got it. I more than got it. I didn’t fully trust him either, and I had only been subjected to his bullying for a few weeks. Ema had dealt with it most of her life.

At the same time, he had come to us. He had made the first move. I hated the idea of merely rejecting him back. It felt wrong. It felt like something they would do, not us.

Ema put down her fork. “We should look into Troy’s drug test.”

“Really?”

Ema nodded. “So we can prove once and for all that he’s a lying bully.”

CHAPTER 18

After school I received a group text from Spoon. It was addressed to Rachel, Ema, and me.

Got something. Stop by tonight?

We all texted back that we would.

I got to the locker room early, changed, and found my way to the basket in the corner. I was the first one there and I enjoyed five minutes of solitude. The next guy out of the locker room was a junior named Danny Brown. As I saw him grab a basketball and stroll onto the court, I stopped dribbling and waited for the customary stony glare.

Only I didn't get one.

More than that, instead of heading toward the center basket, Danny Brown started making his way toward me.

"Hey, Mickey," he said.

"Uh, hey, Danny."

No one had ever introduced us. We had never exchanged words before. But that was how it was. Other guys came out, and again, to my astonishment, they made their way toward my corner basket. Danny grabbed the rebound and threw it out to me. We ran passing and shooting drills. People said hello to me. They slapped me five. They asked how I was liking the new school. They asked about some of my classes. They warned me about teachers to stay away from and offered me study guides that would be helpful.

One guy, a senior named Eric Bachmann, asked me if I needed a ride home after practice.

For the first time in my life, I felt I was part of a team.

I know that sounds like nothing in comparison to what was going on around me. Ema had a missing boyfriend. I had a dead father and a mom in rehab, and this crazy Luther guy was probably after me. But right now, for just a minute or two, I let myself revel in this wonderful camaraderie that came so easily to others.

The joy continued on the court. My teammates passed to me. I passed to them. On one fast break, I faked a drive to the hoop, hoisted the ball up over my head, and as though we had communicated telepathically, Brandon leapt high in the air, grabbed the ball in one hand, and sailed in for the alley-oop slam dunk.

Basketball can be poetry in motion.

Everyone whooped and hollered and slapped my back. Brandon just pointed to me, gave a little nod, and started back on defense.

I can't tell you how good that felt.

The cheerleaders were practicing in the corner. They had all seen the play. Rachel gave me a small smile, and my heart did a backflip.

Practice on the court was only an hour today. The second hour was weightlifting down the street at Schultz's Health Club. The club was all sleek machines and chrome weights. Television screens adorned the cardio machines. There was a small clothing store and a juice bar. The music was loud and pulsating.

But our moods sobered up the moment we entered the gym. Schultz's was owned by Boris Schultz, Buck's father, and coming here made everyone think of him. Twenty-plus years ago, Mr. Schultz had been a big-time bodybuilder, a former Mr. New Jersey who reached the top ten for Mr. America. He was still huge with a chest big enough to play paddleball on. He sported a severe crew cut. He looked like the kind of angles and hard edges where if you bumped into him, you could break a bone.

Today, though, Mr. Schultz somehow looked smaller. I had seen that before in my mother and maybe in myself. Illness can do that to you, but so could sadness. He led us through our weightlifting stations, trying to sound upbeat and enthusiastic but today it felt flat. Chest press, bicep curls, squats.

He yelled out all the usual encouraging clichés about maximizing effort and “come on, two more” and stuff like that.

But his heart wasn’t in it.

The last time we had been here, no one had wanted to partner up with me. Coach Stashower had finally stepped forward and gone through the circuit as my partner. Today I had plenty of volunteers and ended up with Danny Brown. We were about halfway through the circuit when I spotted something peculiar. Or should I say, someone.

Uncle Myron?

I could see him standing in Mr. Schultz’s office through the big glass window. Mr. Schultz left the weight area and greeted him. Buck’s older brother, town legend Randy Schultz, was also there. Someone had once explained to me the odds of becoming a professional athlete. In short, they are close to zero. Kasselton is a pretty big town. I read somewhere that in our New Jersey county, for every three thousand boys who start playing organized basketball in third grade, only one will eventually play college on some level—Division One, Two, or Three. So think about it. In our town alone, the league started with five hundred kids. That meant one kid every six years would play any college basketball on any level. The odds of going pro from there?

Forget it.

In the history of the sports-crazy town of Kasselton, there had only been one professional athlete out of the thousands of kids who’d participated, though injuries prevented him from playing more than a game or two.

You guessed it. Uncle Myron Bolitar.

Now, for the first time since Myron’s career came crashing down two decades ago, Kasselton had another potential professional athlete—a football tight end named Randy Schultz, Buck’s older brother. After breaking every receiving record at Kasselton High, Randy had gone on to stardom in the Big Ten, was named MVP of the Orange Bowl, and was currently waiting for the NFL draft. The experts had Randy pegged to go somewhere in the first two rounds.

Kasselton was poised to have its first professional football player.

But right now Randy Schultz, future professional tight end, looked grim and serious—and he was talking to my uncle. The conversation was

animated, at least on Randy's part. I looked over, trying to catch Myron's eyes. Buck's father spotted me. He frowned and pulled down the shade.

What was that all about?

"Mickey?"

It was Danny Brown.

"Next station."

The squat rack. I loaded on the weight and spotted Danny. We finished up and headed back to the locker room.

"A couple of us are going to hang out at Pizzaiola after practice. You want a ride? I can take you home afterward."

A flush of joy rushed through me. "Uh, sure, thanks."

He gave me a crooked smile. I showered and tried to suppress the smile. It had been a good day. There had been painfully few in the past eight months. I wanted one night of being normal. I wanted a night where I could go out for pizza with my teammates.

Was that so wrong?

Ten guys ended up at Pizzaiola. I would tell you what we talked about, but it was just guy talk. We complained about the local pro teams. We poked gentle fun at some of the teachers. We talked about girls, though I didn't really know any of them. They asked me questions about myself.

"Where did you live before this?"

"Lots of places," I said.

"Like?"

"Africa mostly. South America, Asia, Europe. We traveled a lot."

They listened wide-eyed. Most of them had only lived and known life in Kasselton. The second "newest" player had moved to town eight years ago. These guys had all grown up together. They knew everything about one another, could almost predict what the other would say, knew exactly how to make one another laugh, what buttons to push, when to back off.

For these guys, I had turned from weird to exotic.

I don't know how much pizza we ate, but it was a lot. Brandon especially could put it away. Adults came in and said hello and asked about the team's chances. Everyone seemed to know everyone. Brandon always stood and shook the adult's hand. Sometimes he would introduce them to us with too much polish. "Mr. Mignone, allow me to introduce you to" and then he'd name us from right to left. Most of the guys nodded back. I hadn't

been raised that way, so I too stood and shook each hand. Inevitably they would say the same thing:

““Bolitar”? Are you related to Myron?”

“I’m his nephew.”

They would put together then that I was Brad’s son and grow quiet.

Like I said, everyone knew everyone. I guessed, at some point, that meant they knew my dad too.

I was having fun, especially when the attention turned away from me and they let me just observe and listen. I laughed a lot. I tried to remember the last time I laughed this much, and I don’t think I ever had. I wanted the world to go away. I wanted to forget about the Abeona Shelter or missing kids or my dad or . . .

Or Spoon in that hospital bed.

I closed my eyes. Yeah, I wanted to forget. Just for one night. But I didn’t get that. I got a few hours, and maybe, for now, that was enough.

My phone buzzed when the text came in. It was from Ema: **we’re all here. where are you????**

CHAPTER 19

When I arrived at the hospital, Ema and Rachel met me by the elevator. Ema looked at me warily.

“What time did practice end?” she asked.

“Don’t worry about it.”

Rachel could see the tension, but she wisely let it go. “Come on. We can all go in.”

“I thought it was only one of us at a time.”

“New nurse, new rule,” Rachel said. “Today’s said it was okay.”

Rachel led the way. I fell in behind her with Ema, who kept her eyes focused straight ahead.

“What?” I asked her.

“It’s late.”

“So?”

“So where were you?”

“Basketball.”

“That ended hours ago,” Ema said.

“You’re kidding, right?”

Ema kept walking.

“I have to report in to you wherever I’m going?”

“Only when you say you’re going to meet me.”

“I lost track of time. I had practice and we went to Buck’s dad’s gym and then, I don’t know, we went to Pizzaiola.”

She stopped. “You went with *them* for pizza?”

“Them. They’re my teammates, Ema. Don’t you get that?”

She just shook her head.

“What now?”

“You don’t get it, do you?” she said.

“They’re my teammates. I don’t have to hate them.”

“I didn’t say you had to.”

“But?”

“But nothing, Mickey. You’re free to do whatever you want.”

“Thanks, Mom,” I said.

We reached Spoon’s room. He sat up in bed with that wonderful, dopey smile on his face. “Hey, Mickey, did you tell them?”

“Tell them what?”

“That I’m meant for great things.”

“Wait,” I said, “you heard that?”

“I heard *everything*.”

“So the whole time Bat Lady was here . . .”

“I was awake, yep.”

Rachel gasped. “She was here? In this room?”

Ema stared daggers at me. Great. Now that I got the basketball team to stop with the stares, Ema had picked up the habit.

“Yep,” Spoon said. “She pretended to be a nurse. She said I was meant for great things.” He wiggled his eyebrows at Rachel. “Impressed?”

I looked at Ema. “I was going to tell you at lunch,” I said to her, “but then Troy came by . . .”

“That’s okay,” Rachel said, though I hadn’t been talking to her. I think that she knew. I think that she was trying to save me. “So what did she say?”

I filled them in on the Bat Lady’s visit. When I finished, Rachel said, “So now we know for certain. We have to find Jared Lowell.”

I nodded. Ema didn’t. She had stopped staring daggers. Now she just looked plain hurt. Part of me understood. Part of me was getting a little annoyed.

“The question is,” Rachel continued, “how?”

Spoon cleared his throat. “That’s where I come in.”

We all turned to him. He clicked a button on his laptop. “I have just sent you all my most recent file on Jared Lowell. I managed to get into his

Farnsworth School files. He's a good student, by the way. Top of his class. But more important, I got both his dorm address and course schedule. You'll also find a campus map in the attachment." Spoon pushed the glasses up his nose. "With this information, it shouldn't be hard to find him."

"The campus is in Connecticut," Rachel said.

"I know."

"So how are we going to get up there?"

"Oh," Spoon said, "Mickey drives."

"Not legally," Ema said.

"And I can't just drive up to Connecticut," I said. "It's wrong to do it locally, but it would be way too risky to go that far without a license. Plus my uncle has confiscated all the car keys."

"You could take the bus," Spoon said. He was typing on the laptop. "Let's see. Grab the four-four-one on Northfield Avenue and change in Newark." He listed some morning departure times. "You could take a taxi from there."

"So when do we go?" I asked.

"No school tomorrow," Ema said. "Teacher conference. It'll be our best chance."

I would need to be back by 4:00 P.M. for basketball practice, but I didn't feel the need to tell her that right now. A phone buzzed. It was Rachel's. She took a look at her screen and frowned. I couldn't help it. I wondered whether it was Troy.

"It's my dad," she said with a heavy sigh. "Ever since my mom died . . ."

She didn't finish the sentence. We all understood.

"He wants to know where I am," she said. "I better go."

Rachel pocketed her phone and hoisted up her backpack. "It'll be tough for me to get away tomorrow. Dad wants to take me out to breakfast and then maybe to visit my grandmother."

"You don't have to explain," I said.

"We can handle this," Ema added.

"Might need someone back here anyway," I said. "Just in case."

I had no idea what I meant by that, but it sounded good, like we were giving her something to do. But Ema was right. We didn't need three of us going up there anyway.

We said our good-byes and Rachel walked out the door. When she was gone, Spoon looked up at me and said, “We can work on two things at the same time, Mickey.”

“Meaning?”

“Meaning Bat Lady talked to you about Luther.”

I said nothing.

“Luther is the guy in that photograph you gave me, right?”

“Right.”

“Your Butcher?” Ema asked.

I nodded.

“So your dad was like us,” Spoon said. “He rescued kids for Abeona.”

“Yes,” I said.

“Did you know?”

“No,” I said. “Or maybe I suspected, I don’t know.”

“I don’t get it,” Ema said. “If your father rescued Luther, why would he now be trying to hurt you?”

“Simple,” Spoon said.

“How’s that?”

“Luther must not have wanted to be rescued.”

I looked at Ema. She looked at me.

“I don’t understand.”

“Neither do I yet,” Spoon said. “But Bat Lady said sometimes things go wrong. I started to think about it. I remember reading about Stockholm syndrome. You know what that is?”

I had a vague idea, but I let him tell us.

“You start liking your captives. You don’t know it’s wrong anymore. Or I was reading about kids with really bad parents—parents who hurt them—but they still want to stay with them. So maybe this Luther was like that. Maybe Luther didn’t want to be rescued.”

I glanced at Ema. “He’s making sense,” she said.

Spoon spread his arms. “I’m just full of surprises, aren’t I?”

“So how does that help us find him?”

“That’s what I plan on finding out,” Spoon said. “I got that picture you gave me. I got a first name. It isn’t a lot, but maybe I’ll find something.”

CHAPTER 20

Ema was quiet in the elevator.

“Let’s take the first bus up to Connecticut tomorrow,” I said. “We could be up at Jared’s school by ten.”

“Okay,” Ema said.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

I frowned at her.

“I know how much you want to be part of that team,” she said.

“And I know that scares you,” I said.

“What?”

“You think I’ll start hanging out with them instead of you?”

Ema shook her head. “You’re so thick sometimes.”

“That’s not it?”

“No, that’s not it.”

We were outside now. The night air was cool, and I welcomed it. Hospital air is always stilted and heavy. It is hard to breathe in a hospital. I stopped a moment and sucked in a deep breath.

“Then what?” I asked.

“Never mind.”

“Come on, don’t be like that. What?”

“With some people, you tell them the oven is hot, they don’t touch it,” Ema said. “But other people have to touch the oven. They have to feel the pain.”

I frowned again. "That's deep, Ema. And isn't it supposed to be a frying pan?"

She stopped and put her hands on my arms. I saw her eyes in the moonlight look up at me. We just stood there a second and a weird thought hit me:

I wanted to kiss her.

I don't think I ever consciously thought about that before. We had always been squarely in the "friend zone." But looking down on her in this wonderful light, I wanted to cup her face in my hands and kiss her.

"You're going to touch the oven," she said. "I want to protect you from that pain. But I can't. I can only tell you that when it hurts, I'll be there for you."

"And I'll be there for you," I said. "Always."

"Always," Ema repeated.

We stared into each other's eyes. I don't know how long. I was about to move my hands to her face when someone driving by us honked and yelled, "Get a room!"

That broke the spell.

Ema's hands slid off my arms. She took a step back. We both turned and started for home. We walked in silence for a while. Neither of us would raise this. We would both just pretend the moment never happened. With each step it seemed farther away, as though we were leaving the near kiss in the hospital parking lot. The tension eased.

We were becoming just friends again.

When we reached the intersection, Ema surprised me by starting down the road toward Bat Lady's now-burned-down house. I stayed right by her side.

"What are you thinking?" I asked.

"There are tunnels under the house. That's what you told me."

"Right."

"And last time we went down to the basement, we found a clue."

"You're thinking maybe we can find another?"

Ema shrugged. "It's worth a try."

I had thought the same thing, of course. It was dark out now. It would be easier to approach without being seen by neighbors. Then again, the night

also made an already spooky place even spookier. We stopped on the sidewalk.

Up ahead of us, the house's collapsed remains stood in menacing silhouette. The streetlights were dim. The house had been built right along the woods. It was odd, I thought now, how none of the trees behind it caught fire.

What horrors, I wondered, had this house seen over the years?

We didn't have flashlights on us, but we had our smartphones. I got the flashlight app ready. I didn't want to use it until we were belowground. A light might be seen by nosy neighbors. They'd call the police, and let's just say that wouldn't end well.

Our approach was blocked by dozens of signs reading KEEP OUT and NO TRESPASSING. The yellow tape wrapped around the burned ruins worked like a reflector on a kid's bike.

"Strange," Ema whispered.

"What?"

"All the signs, the tape. It's almost overkill."

I had thought about that too. Were the police and fire department really that worried about keeping people out? The signs didn't look officially issued, just something you'd buy at the hardware store. I wondered whether Lizzy Sobek had put them up. I couldn't see that. Maybe it was one of the other people who worked for the Abeona Shelter. Maybe it was the guy with the shaved head whom I had recently learned was named Dylan Shaykes.

Didn't matter. I didn't care about the warnings. I was going in. There might be clues about Jared Lowell somewhere in the bowels of this property, but I was more thinking that there might be information about my father's sworn enemy, the mysterious Luther.

Bat Lady—sorry, I still thought of her that way rather than Lizzy Sobek—had said that Luther had been rescued by Abeona and that his photograph had been in that hallway he burned down to the ground.

"Another thing," Ema whispered.

"What?"

"Why did Luther set the house on fire?"

"Because I was in it."

It was too dark to see her face, but I could feel her skeptical frown. “So why not, I don’t know, shoot or stab you? Why burn an entire house to the ground?”

I saw where she was going with this. “Because he wanted to destroy evidence.”

“Could be.”

“And some of the evidence—”

“Could be in those tunnels under the house,” Ema finished for me.

We reached what had been the front stoop before the fire. I remembered how decrepit the house had been, how the very foundations seemed to shake when I knocked on that door, how the paint job was so old that flakes fell off as though it had a bad case of dandruff.

Now the house was rubble. But somehow that didn’t seem to lessen the power. The fire had been put out days ago, but an acrid smell assaulted my senses. There was no smoke or smoldering going on, but it still seemed as though steam was coming up from the wreckage. I thought about what this house had held. I thought about the fact that a legendary hero from the Holocaust, long thought dead, had lived here in hiding for so many years. I thought about all the children who had been rescued, all the ones who had temporarily been hidden here or had healed here or had told their tales here.

The building might be gone, but those voices still whispered to us.

Ema took my hand as we stepped into the debris. We had been here before. We knew the way. The fireplace had been on the left. There had been an old photograph of Bat Lady with a group of hippies, probably taken in the sixties. I rescued that picture from the fire. It was in the drawer next to my bed.

Everything in the room was gone—the couch, the old record player where Bat Lady played her rock ’n’ roll vinyl albums, the chair, the armoire, all of it. They were soot and dust.

I flicked on the flashlight app, keeping the beam low. Last time I’d been here, the basement stairs had been blocked by debris. They weren’t now, but that was probably because I had made an opening.

I turned off the app. Okay, I knew where to go now.

I started toward it. Ema stayed with me.

“I’ll go down first and make sure it’s safe,” I said.

“Because you’re the big brave man?”

“Because I’ve been down there before, remember?”

“I do. You made me stay up here, remember?”

I sighed. “You want to go first?”

“And bruise your heroic ego? Not a chance.”

I shook my head. The moonlight was just enough to catch her teasing smile. I wanted to give her a gentle shake. Or maybe kiss her.

Man, I had to stop thinking like this.

The opening was a giant hole. I shined the light down it for a brief moment. The stairs did not look sturdy enough to hold my weight, but I didn’t have any choice. I knew the drop was not far anyway. I just had to be prepared.

When I reached the third step, I heard a cracking noise. I leapt right before the stair gave way and landed on the concrete floor.

“You okay?” Ema asked.

“Fine.”

I turned on my flashlight app. I was below the earth now. The neighbors would not be able to see the beam.

“I’m coming down,” Ema said.

“Wait.”

“What?”

The beam of the flashlight danced around the room. In one corner, there was a washer and dryer that looked like something from the Eisenhower administration. Some old clothes were piled on the left. I opened two of the cardboard boxes. There was nothing but junk in them. No files, no clues, all a mess of dust and soot.

“Don’t bother,” I said. “There’s nothing here.”

“Are you sure?”

I checked the floor again. That was where I’d found the photograph last time we were here. But there was nothing now. Finally I raised the beam toward where I knew the answer would be.

The reinforced steel door.

I had seen it last time I was here. While everything else in this house had been decaying, this door was stronger than ever. I put my hand against it. The soot fell away and I could still see a shine. I tried the knob.

Locked.

I had expected that. I tried to push my shoulder against it. It didn't budge a bit.

I needed to get to the other side of that door.

But there was no way I was going to make it this way. That didn't mean I was defeated. I just had to go another route.

"Mickey?"

"I'm coming back up."

I tested the bottom steps. They were sturdy enough. I climbed a few. Ema lowered her hand to offer me help. I didn't need it, but if I refused it, she would make another crack about me being sexist or whatever. So I took it, which may have been an even more sexist move.

"So what now?" she asked when I was back aboveground.

"The garage," I said. "When Dylan Shaykes brought me here, he had me go through a tunnel that started in the garage out back and made its way to the house. I saw other corridors and doors. One, I bet, leads to whatever is behind that steel door."

The garage was in the woods, about fifty yards away. It seemed so odd, but then again everything about this property did. The woods came right up to the very house, as though they had sneaked in one night and taken over the backyard. That had made no sense to me. Now, of course, I understood it better. There was a road in the woods. You could drive up to the garage back there without fear of being seen. You could even use the tunnel in the garage and enter the house without anyone ever noticing.

There was a lot of secrecy surrounding the Abeona Shelter.

The garage doors were locked, but this time the doors weren't reinforced with anything. I checked the bolt and saw it was right by the knob. Good. I lifted my leg and smashed my heel into the spot directly above the knob.

The door gave way.

"So we're breaking and entering," Ema said.

"Probably."

She shrugged and headed in first. I aimed the flashlight at the ground and said, "Stop."

"What?"

I gestured toward the floor. There were fresh footprints in the dirt.

I put my foot next to one of the prints. I wear a size thirteen. This shoe was only slightly smaller, which meant that the prints probably belonged to

an adult male.

Using my flashlight, I followed the footprints right up to the . . .

The trapdoor that led to the tunnel. They stopped there.

Never one to miss the obvious, I said, "Someone's been here recently."

"Or is still here now," Ema added.

Silence.

Then I said, "Let me—"

"If you say 'go down alone,' I will punch you."

I looked up at her. "Then neither of us goes down."

"Huh?"

"Spoon is paralyzed. He got shot. I'm not taking any more chances."

Ema shook her head. "We have to do this, Mickey. You know that."

"We don't have to do anything. Suppose Luther is down there."

"Then we have him cornered."

"You're kidding, right?"

Ema moved closer to me. "What else can we do, Mickey? Go home?"

I wanted her to go home. But I knew that she wouldn't.

"We'll be careful," she said. "Okay?"

What choice did I have? "Okay."

The trapdoor had a latch. I bent down and pulled the handle. We both looked down into the tunnel.

Darkness. Nothing but a black hole.

"Terrific," I said.

Ema had already turned on her flashlight app. There was a ladder leading down. She said, "Me first," and put her foot on the first rung.

"Let me go."

"I don't trust you. You'll look up my skirt."

"Uh, you're wearing jeans."

"Oops." She smothered a nervous laugh and started down the ladder. I followed. When we reached the bottom, Ema aimed the beam in front of her. The flashlight wasn't all that strong, but it just confirmed what I already knew: We were in a tunnel. At the end of it, if we made the proper turns, would be that steel-reinforced door.

The question was, what else would we find?

She was about to start forward when I put my hand on her arm. She turned toward me. I put a finger to my lips to signal for her to stay silent.

She did so. I listened hard.

Nothing.

That was a good sign. Everything echoed down here. If Luther or someone else was moving, we would have heard them. Of course, that didn't mean that they weren't down here. The echo worked both ways. They would have heard us descending the ladder. Luther or whoever could be waiting somewhere, ducking low, ready to pounce.

"We move slowly," I whispered.

Ema nodded.

We started down the tunnel. I wondered how something like this had been built. No way it passed Kasselton code. Did Lizzy Sobek hire construction workers? I doubted it. Did volunteers work on it? Did those "chosen" by the Abeona Shelter build this tunnel?

Maybe. Maybe my father helped build it.

But I somehow doubted it. It seemed older than that. How long did it take to construct? And really, who cared anyway?

We reached a door.

I remembered passing this door the last time I was here. Dylan Shaykes, who had brought me, told me to keep going. I tried to flash back and remember now. Did he seem afraid? No. He had just wanted me to keep going because I had been brought here to see Bat Lady.

I reached for the knob.

But there wasn't one.

Huh? I looked again. I could see what looked to be a keyhole. Nothing else. The door was smooth. It was also reinforced steel. I pushed against it. No yield at all.

What was Abeona trying to hide?

We were about to continue along the corridor when Ema said, "Mickey, look."

I turned to Ema. At first I didn't see it, but then I followed the flashlight beam down toward the ground. There was a small lever, like something you'd pull for a fire alarm.

"What do you think?" I asked her.

"I think we pull it."

Ema reached for it before I could. Her hand took hold and pulled. At first, it didn't give at all. Then she pulled harder. The lever gave way with a

sucking pop sound.

The wall next to us started to slide.

We stepped back and watched it move. It was bizarre. The front part of the wall came forward and moved to the right. It slid in front of the steel-reinforced door, covering it.

Ema said, “What the . . . ?”

The door was gone now. Completely camouflaged.

We stood there for a moment and stared, half expecting something else to happen. It didn’t. The door was gone. I wondered whether there were more doors in this tunnel.

Or more levers.

“Pull it again,” I said.

She did. The wall grunted before moving back to where it had been before. The door was once again visible. I pushed on the door one more time, hoping that maybe the lever unlocked it or something, but it didn’t give.

“I don’t get it,” I said.

“Neither do I. Should we keep moving?”

I nodded. There wasn’t much more for us to do here.

There was a fork up ahead in the tunnel. We stopped at it. I tried to remember when I was here last which way I went. I didn’t remember the fork but I was pretty distracted. Dylan Shaykes—at that time I only thought of him as Shaved Head—was leading me toward the house.

What way had we gone—left or right?

Right, I thought. I don’t have a great sense of direction, but right also seemed the way to the house. Plus, the bigger prong in the fork—the one you would more naturally take—was the one on the right.

I had already gone in that direction, though, hadn’t I?

I was about to shine the flashlight to the left when I heard a noise. I froze.

Ema whispered, “What?”

“Did you hear that?”

“I don’t think so.”

We stayed still. I heard it again. I couldn’t tell what it was, though. My imagination? Maybe. But whatever it was, it seemed very far away. Have you ever had that? Have you ever heard a sound so soft, so far away, so

muffled that you aren't even sure that you are hearing anything at all? Like maybe your ears are ringing and you're just imagining the whole thing.

That was what this was like.

"Do you hear it?" I asked her.

And again, because we are so much in tune, Ema replied, "Maybe. Something really faint . . ."

We didn't know what to do.

"It could just be an old pipe," Ema said. "Or house noises. You know. You can barely hear it at all."

"I know."

"So what should we do?"

"Probably not stay much longer."

I shone the flashlight to my left. When we both saw what was there, Ema said, "Bingo."

Maybe, I thought.

The first thing we saw was an old television set. I don't know how old exactly. I mean, it wasn't ancient—not like that noisy refrigerator that broke on the Bat Lady—but it was a thick console set with a screen that couldn't be more than eight inches. A machine that looked like a giant old-fashioned tape recorder was attached to it.

"It's for VCR tapes, I think," Ema said. "We still have something like it in the theater room."

I stepped into the room. On the shelf above, there were dozens of tapes, lined up like books. I started to pull them down from the shelf.

"I don't think they're for a VCR," I said.

Uncle Myron had old VCR tapes of his high school games in the house. These tapes looked slightly different. They were a little smaller, less rectangular. I hoped to find something on the labels, but the only thing written on them were numbers.

"Mickey?"

It was Ema. Her tone made my blood go cold. I turned slowly toward her. Ema's eyes were wide. Her hand was resting on top of the television.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"The television," she said.

"What about it?"

I saw her swallow. "It's warm," she said. "Someone was just using it."

We both froze again, in this dark, dank space, and listened.

Another noise. This one was real. No mistaking it.

Ema looked down at the attached tape machine. She pressed a button and a tape ejected from the machine. She jammed it into her purse and said, "Let's get out of here."

I didn't argue. We hurried back into the tunnel, this time heading toward the garage. We had gone about ten yards when I heard the noise behind me. I stopped and turned to look back.

Luther was there.

He stood at the far end of the tunnel, glaring at us. For a moment, none of us moved. Even down here, even in this faint light, I could still see the sandy hair and green eyes. I flashed back to the first time I had seen them—the day of the car accident. I was lying injured, woozy, not sure what had happened. I looked to the side and saw my father lying very still. A paramedic looked back at me and shook his head.

That paramedic was down at the end of the tunnel.

Luther's hands formed two fists. He looked enraged. When he took a step toward us, Ema grabbed my arm and yelled, "Run!"

I didn't move.

He took another step.

Ema said, "Mickey?"

"Go," I said to her.

"What?"

"Go!" I shouted.

I wasn't leaving. I wasn't letting him escape again. This Luther, this man I didn't know, was my father's sworn enemy. That made him mine.

My father's grave might not have held any answers. But I bet this guy did.

I wasn't going to let him out of my sight again.

Luther and I faced each other like two gunslingers in an old Western movie. I wasn't sure what move to make. I had spent most of my life overseas, in a variety of countries, and my father had insisted that I learn the various martial arts. I was big. I was strong. I knew how to fight.

But most martial arts work by using your opponent's aggression. I had never learned, for example, how to sprint toward an opponent in a tunnel

and take him down. I knew better how to counter an attack like that, how to roll with my adversary and incapacitate him.

So I waited another second for him to come toward me.

He waited too.

I wondered whether he knew how to fight. It didn't matter. He was not getting out of here. He was not getting near Ema. It was just the two of us.

No reason to wait any longer.

I started to calculate the distance and figure an angle of attack—go low, take out the legs—when I heard a voice behind us.

“What the—?”

Someone was coming down via the trapdoor in the garage. I thought maybe I recognized the voice.

“Kasselton police! Everybody freeze!”

It was Chief Taylor, Troy's father. He hurried down the ladder. I glanced for a second, no more. I kept my eyes on Luther's. He kept his eyes on me. But I turned away just for a second.

“For the love of . . .” Chief Taylor's mouth dropped open as he looked around in disbelief at the tunnel. “What is this place?”

Another officer was coming down the ladder behind him. I quickly turned back to Luther.

Luther started to run the other way.

“No!” I shouted.

“Freeze!” It was Chief Taylor again. The beam of his flashlight was on me. “Mickey Bolitar! Freeze right now!”

I didn't listen. I sprinted toward the end of the tunnel. When I veered right, I saw the door—the steel-reinforced one in the basement, maybe?—slam closed.

Luther had run through it.

I ran toward it. I put my hand on the knob.

“Okay, Mickey,” Chief Taylor said, standing side by side with another officer, “that's far enough.”

They were there. I had my hand on the knob and tried to calculate how long it would take to open the door and run through it. Too long. Taylor and the other officer would be on me.

That was when we all heard the scream.

The two police officers turned toward it.

“Help! Oh, help!”

Suddenly I got it. The scream and call for help had come from Ema, but I could tell, from the exaggerated tone, she wasn't in real danger.

Genius that she was, Ema was intentionally diverting their attention from me!

I didn't wait. I pulled open the door and ran through it. I was back in the basement. It was darker now. I heard a crunching noise above me. I used my flashlight app and shone it upward.

I saw Luther's leg on the top step.

I ran and leapt toward it. I grabbed the ankle and hung on for all I was worth. I was actually suspended in the air, my grip on his ankle loosening, when I felt his other foot stomp on my arm. I didn't care. I hung on.

“Let go of me!” Luther shouted.

“Where's my father?”

“He's dead!”

I didn't believe him. And I had a plan.

If I could just swing my legs to the stairs, I would have enough leverage to pull Luther down to the concrete basement floor.

“Let go of me!”

“No!”

I pulled and arched my back, aiming my legs for the stairs. Behind me I heard the door open.

“Freeze!”

It was Chief Taylor again.

“He's getting away!” I shouted.

But Chief Taylor and the other officer wouldn't listen. They tackled me instead. I tried to hold on, tried with everything I had to keep my grip, but I could feel my fingers slip away under their combined weight.

“He killed my father!”

I crashed to the ground. Above me, I saw Luther smile and slip away.

“Stay put,” Taylor yelled.

“He killed my father! Stop him!”

“What are you talking about?”

But it was pointless. We were belowground. Luther was already off and running. Chief Taylor stood. The other officer flipped me onto my stomach and snapped the cuffs on me.

Ema came through the door. "Leave him alone! He didn't do anything!"

"You're both under arrest," Taylor said.

"For what?"

"A neighbor saw you break into the garage. That's a crime. You've wiggled out of plenty of trouble, Mickey, but not this time."

"Listen to me," I said, "you have to find that man."

"I don't have to find anyone," Chief Taylor said. "I told you to stop. You didn't. You ran away from a police officer. You resisted arrest. I'm sorry, Mickey. You've gotten too many breaks."

Ema tried. "But if you'd just listen to us—"

Chief Taylor spun toward her. "Do you want me to cuff you too, missy?"

"What?"

"Turn around."

"You're kidding—"

"Turn around!"

Ema did so. I watched in disbelief as Chief Taylor cuffed her too.

"I don't want to hear another word out of either of you."

They led us back down the corridor through the tunnel. Again I saw Taylor looking around as though he couldn't believe his eyes. "What is this place?" he asked me.

I said nothing.

"I asked you a question, Mickey."

"I don't know."

"So why did you break into the garage?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

I saw his face redden. "That's it. I've had enough of you. I'm taking you down to the city prison in Newark. You're going to spend some time in that system. Adult population. I told you once about the guy with the really long fingernails, remember? You're about to be his cellmate. Jackson?"

He turned to the other officer.

"Let's lock them in the squad car and check out this tunnel."

It was hard to get us up the ladder because our hands were cuffed behind our backs. Jackson suggested taking them off us. Taylor refused. When we reached the front yard, he said, "You wait with them here. I'm going back into—"

"What's going on here?"

We all stopped at the sound of the scratchy old voice. There, standing on the sidewalk as though she had just materialized, was Bat Lady. Jackson choked back a scream. Bat Lady was back in her full crazy-person persona—the long white-to-yellow gown, ratty slippers, her white hair flowing down to her waist.

“Ma’am,” Taylor said, risking a step in her direction, “these two broke into your own garage.”

“No, they didn’t.”

“Uh, yes, ma’am, we spotted—”

“Don’t ‘yes, ma’am’ me,” she snapped. “They have permission to be here. I asked them to check my tunnel for me.”

“You did?”

“Of course.”

“Well, about that tunnel—”

“Why are they handcuffed?”

“Well, see, we got a report that they broke in—”

“And I just told you that they did no such thing, didn’t I?”

She waited for an answer.

“Uh, yes, ma’am.”

“So uncuff those children immediately.”

Taylor gestured at Jackson. Jackson took out a key.

“Ma’am, could you tell what those tunnels are for?”

“No.”

“Pardon?”

“Do you have a warrant?”

“A warrant? No. Like I said, we got a report—”

“Has this become a police state? I’ve lived in police states before. They are horrible places.”

“No, ma’am, this isn’t a police state.”

“Then you have no right to be on my property, do you?”

“We were responding to a call.”

“Which was made in error obviously. So now you know that. Do you know what I want you to do now?”

“Um . . .” I was enjoying watching Chief Taylor squirm. “Leave?”

“Exactly. Don’t make me ask again. Shoo.”

CHAPTER 21

After Chief Taylor's squad car drove off, Bat Lady started toward the garage. We followed her. I asked her questions. She didn't respond. Ema asked her questions. She didn't respond. She just kept walking in silence.

The woods seemed to be thicker now. The darkness settled over us like a blanket.

"Miss Sobek?" I tried again.

Finally she spoke. "Why did you come?"

"To find clues."

"About?"

"About Luther."

I couldn't see her in the dark. "I guess you found more than that."

"Who is he?"

"I told you."

"He said my father's dead."

The old woman didn't reply.

"Was he lying?"

"I told you before."

"You heard his voice."

"Yes."

"And the dead never talk to you."

She didn't bother replying.

Ema asked, "Are we going back to the tunnel?"

"No, Ema," Bat Lady said. "We will never go back there again."

“I don’t understand.”

“It’s been exposed. The police know about it now.”

“It was hardly a secret,” I said. “Luther knew about it.”

“Of course he did.”

“I don’t understand,” Ema said. “Where are we going?”

“You’re both going home.”

“And you?”

She raised a hand straight in the air. Suddenly headlights came on. A car came up the road hidden in the woods. I wasn’t surprised when I saw it. It was the same black car that had tailed me since I moved in with Uncle Myron. The passenger door opened.

Shaved Head stepped out. He was dressed, as always, in a black suit. Even at night, he still wore the sunglasses.

“Hello, Dylan,” I said to him.

He ignored me.

“Go home,” Bat Lady said to us. “Don’t ever come back here.”

“What are we supposed to do?” I asked.

“I told you already. You remember, don’t you?”

I nodded. “You want us to find Jared Lowell.”

Bat Lady looked at Ema as though she were seeing her for the first time. She stepped toward her and put her hands on her shoulders. “You’re stronger than you know, Ema.”

Ema glanced at me and then back at Bat Lady. “Uh, thanks.”

“You love this boy.”

“Well, I don’t know about that. In a way I don’t even know him.”

“It will hurt.”

“What will?” Ema asked.

“The truth.”

Ema and I stood perfectly still.

“Go home. Both of you. Don’t ever come back here.”

Lizzy Sobek looked over her property as though seeing it for the first time—or, more likely, the last. I wondered what she saw, how much history lay on these grounds, how many rescued and terrified children had come through here.

“None of us,” she said, “should ever come back.”

Bat Lady seemed to float toward the car. Shaved Head/Dylan opened the back door of the car. She slipped inside without another word. Dylan got into the front passenger seat.

The black car drove off.

CHAPTER 22

That night I dreamed about my mother.

I don't remember the specifics. The dream was pretty surreal. Mom was young in the dream, really young, like before-I-remember-her young. Sometimes my dream mom was wearing tennis whites. Other times not. She was healthy, though, smiling the way she used to, the way she did before my dad died and the demons moved in and took her away from me.

Why did she have Dad cremated and not tell me?

I didn't have a clue.

Why would she bury an urn of ashes as though it were his body? Again no clue. But I had seen the authorization form. That was her signature.

Or was it?

I had already been dumb enough to be fooled via common Photoshopping that Luther was an old Nazi from World War II. Maybe the answer here was just as simple. Maybe Mom hadn't signed the document. Maybe someone had simply forged her name.

Again the obvious question: Why?

Answer: Take it a step at a time. See if Mom signed the papers. If she didn't, then we check on the notary. We see where that leads. But first things first.

I needed to see my mom.

...

"You're up early," Uncle Myron said a little too cheerfully.

“I’m going somewhere with Ema.”

“Where?”

I didn’t want to get into my trip to the Farnsworth School. “Just somewhere.”

He didn’t like it, but he didn’t push it either. Uncle Myron was eating a bowl of unhealthy kid cereal and reading the back of the box. He did this every morning.

“Can I pour you some?”

He also asked this every morning. I’d rather just pour sugar down my throat. “No, thanks. I’ll scramble up some eggs.”

“I can do it for you.”

He also made this offer every morning. Once I let him make them. They were terrible. Myron couldn’t cook. He has trouble reheating a pizza without messing it up.

“I’m good, thanks.”

I broke the eggs, added a dash of milk. Uncle Myron had purchased some truffle oil for me. That was a secret I had learned from my mother. It was expensive, but when I could get it, a dab of the oil made the eggs a lot tastier.

“I need to see my mom,” I said.

Uncle Myron looked up from the cereal box. “You can’t.”

“I know she’s in rehab.”

“And you know the doctors said we had to stay away for at least two more weeks.”

“It’s important.”

Myron stood. “You want to ask her about the cremation.”

“Right.”

“It won’t help,” he said. “I mean, think about it. What’s she going to tell you, Mickey?”

I stayed silent.

“If your mom says she didn’t do it, maybe she was just so high she doesn’t remember. If she says she did it . . .” Myron stopped, thought about it. “Well, okay, maybe that would end whatever quest you’re on.”

“I’m going to call the rehab,” I said. “But I’m going to need you to back me up on this.”

Uncle Myron let loose a long sigh but he nodded. "Okay, sure. But we need to do what's best for your mom. You get that, right?"

Of course I got that. He sat back down and started eating the kid cereal again. I moved to the stove. I had forty minutes until I was meeting Ema at the bus station. Then I remembered something.

"Hey, Myron?"

"What?"

"I saw you at Schultz's gym. You were talking to Mr. Schultz and Randy."

Myron took another bite of cereal. He may have nodded, I wasn't sure.

"What was that all about?" I asked.

"I've known the family for a long time. Mr. Schultz grew up in this town."

"Did he go to Kasselton High?"

"Yep."

"Your year?"

"No," Myron said. "Your father's."

I wasn't sure how to take that. "Did they know each other?"

"Your father and Mr. Schultz? Sure. They knew each other since grade school."

I tried to imagine that—a world where Buck's father and my father played at recess or whatever as little kids. It was hard to see. "So yesterday you were talking to him and Randy."

"Right."

"What about?"

He took another spoonful of cereal, jammed it into his mouth, chewed too loudly for all the time it had sat in milk. "Do you know what I do for a living?"

"I thought you were retired," I said.

"Temporarily, yeah. I mean, I sold my business. But do you know what I used to do?"

"You were a sports agent, right?"

"Right."

I was using a wooden spatula to work my eggs.

"So that's why they wanted to see you?" I asked.

"Pardon?"

Was Uncle Myron being intentionally thick? “Did Randy want you to be his agent?”

Myron’s words came out slowly. “I don’t think so.”

“What, then?”

“When I was training to become an agent, I went to law school.”

I knew about that. After Myron’s basketball career came to an abrupt end, he ended up at Harvard and became an attorney. “So?”

“So what people tell me is confidential.”

“When you’re acting as a lawyer.”

“Right.”

“So you’re Randy’s lawyer?”

“No.”

“I don’t get it, then.”

Uncle Myron started fidgeting. “Why are you so interested?” he asked.

“No reason,” I said, trying to sound nonchalant. Then: “Do you know he has a brother, Buck?”

“Yeah, I know. He’s a senior. He’s given you some trouble, right?”

“Not anymore.”

Myron nodded. “Mr. Schultz told me. Buck moved back in with his mother. Something about a custody dispute. He was pretty upset about it.”

“So was that what he wanted to talk to you about?” I asked.

“I’m not a divorce lawyer,” Myron said.

“Is that a no?”

“It’s a no.”

I waited. Uncle Myron started reading the back of the cereal box closely now, as though it were religious scripture. “You’re not going to tell me what you guys were talking about, are you?”

He didn’t bother glancing up. “No, Mickey, I’m not.”

“Could you tell me if it had anything to do with Buck?”

Uncle Myron weighed that request before saying, “It doesn’t.”

“So,” I said, “the fact that Randy wanted to talk to you and Buck all of a sudden had to go live with his mom—that’s just a big coincidence?”

“Yes,” Myron said.

But I could hear in his tone that even he didn’t believe it.

CHAPTER 23

I met Ema at the bus stop. “It isn’t a VCR tape,” she said.

“What is it, then?”

“Something called a Betamax. Sony made them. I guess they were popular in the eighties, but they’re obsolete now.”

“So how do we watch it?”

“I don’t know. We could look online, I guess. See if anyone is selling a machine on eBay or something. Or we could go back to Bat Lady’s house and use the one in the tunnel.”

“You heard her.”

Ema nodded. “Never go back. She was pretty adamant about that.”

• • •

The bus hit some traffic near the Tappan Zee Bridge, but still made it in less than three hours. There were three Farnsworth students on our bus—all wearing jackets and ties—so we followed them. Campus was closer than we’d expected, less than a half-mile walk.

We stayed a step behind the three boys. Every once in a while they would turn around and look at us, wondering, I guess, why we were following them. Sometimes they stared openly at Ema. There may have been derision in their eyes, I couldn’t say for sure. Ema was decked out in her customary black—black clothes, black hair, black nail polish, black lipstick. Tattoos ran up and down her arms and across her neck.

I could almost feel her growing uncomfortable next to me, so I decided to break the tension by speaking: “Hey, guys.”

They all turned now and squinted at us.

“Do you know Jared Lowell?” I asked.

“Yeah, sure,” one of them said. The kid had a big mop of blond hair.

“Why, you guys friends?”

I looked at Ema. She looked at me. Man, I hadn’t thought this through. “Uh, sort of.”

Under her breath Ema muttered, “Smooth.”

Blond Mop said, “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing.”

But now Blond Mop looked at me with suspicion. We passed a place called Wilke’s Deli. A bunch of students were lined up to get lunch.

“Uh, I’m his cousin,” I said lamely.

Ema looked on in horror.

“You are?”

“Yeah.”

“I guess height runs in the family, then.”

“I guess.”

“If you’re his cousin,” Blond Mop said, “why did you say ‘sort of’ when I asked if you knew him?”

Ema folded her arms. She wanted to hear this too.

“Did I?” I fumbled. “Oh, I thought you asked if we were friends. We’re cousins. That’s ‘sort of’ friends. You know what I mean?” I smiled like the local TV anchorman. Up ahead I saw a tall white steeple that I recognized from the Farnsworth School website. We were getting close to campus.

“Hey, nice meeting you.”

We quickly veered right. Out of the side of her mouth, Ema said, “Wow, you’re good.”

“Thanks.”

“I was being sarcastic.”

“Yeah, me too.”

She stopped. “Mickey?”

“What?”

“How do I look?”

“Great.”

“Don’t patronize me.”

“I’m not.”

Ema started to bite a nail.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“I really care about this guy, okay? I know you want to dismiss it because it was online. But I have feelings for him. I miss him. We shared in a way that . . .”

I felt a small pang. I waited for her to continue. Then I said, “In a way that what?”

She shook her head. “Never mind. Let’s go.”

On the website, the campus looked beautiful; in person, it looked even better. The perfectly aged brick buildings lined the perimeter of an expansive circle of pure golf-tournament-green grass. The grass has been cut in perfect strips. The circle was big enough to house two soccer fields and a baseball diamond. The fields were all empty now, the entire campus still. I checked the clock on my phone and then I looked at the class schedule.

“Jared is in his Comparative Lit class,” I said. “He gets out in twenty minutes.”

“So what do we do in the meantime?”

I noticed two security guards standing in a booth. One of the guards stared at us. I realized how out of place Ema must look to him.

“We should probably get out of sight,” I said. “It’s an all-boys school, and, well, you probably stand out.”

I meant her gender, of course, but it was more than that. This campus seemed pretty straitlaced and old-school. Ema looked anything but.

“Excuse me.”

I had spoken a few seconds too late. The words had come from yet another campus security guard. He was a small man with a mustache so thick, it looked like someone had glued a guinea pig under his nose.

“Hi,” I said.

“Are you a student here?” he asked me.

I was going to lie and say yes, but that wouldn’t work. The guard would ask me for my student ID or look up my name or something like that. I was debating how to handle it when Ema enthusiastically stuck out her hand.

“Hi!” she said in this fake golly-gee voice that was nearly the polar opposite of her normal affect. “My name is Emma.”

The guard hesitantly took her hand. “Uh, nice to meet you.”

“And your name?” Ema asked, still holding the handshake.

“Bruce Bohuny.”

“Well, nice to meet you too, Officer Bohuny! Oh, and this is my brother Mickey.”

She gestured toward me. I nodded because I’m fast on the uptake.

“Say hi to Officer Bohuny, Mickey.”

“Uh, hi.”

Officer Bohuny and I shook hands.

Ema gave us both her biggest-wattage smile. Who was this girl? “Officer Bohuny, my brother is visiting the campus as a prospective student, and I thought I’d walk around with him. Is that a problem?”

“Well, see, you need visitor passes,” he said.

“We do?” She frowned at me. “Mickey, did you know that?”

Me: “No. I didn’t know.”

“So you two don’t have visitor passes?” Bohuny asked.

“I’m so, *so* sorry,” Ema replied—and she looked more than sorry, almost crushed by this indiscretion. “What should we do, Officer Bohuny?”

“The admissions office is that building on the left.” He pointed with both his finger and, it seemed, that bushy mustache. “The entrance is on the other side of the circle. You can get a pass there. I can walk you over there, if you’d like.”

“Please don’t bother,” Ema said, shaking his hand again. “We’ve taken up enough of your time. Thank you so much, Officer Bohuny.”

“Sure thing.”

We started toward the admissions office. Officer Bohuny kept watch. Under my breath, I muttered to her, “Who are you?”

She gave a small laugh.

“Now what?” I asked.

“Keep walking.”

“Do you have a plan?”

“I do,” Ema said. “You’re going to have to talk to Jared on your own.”

“How?”

“We will go to the admissions. You tell them your name and that you’re a prospective student interested in seeing the campus. You’ll get a visitor’s pass.”

“What about you?”

She shook her head. “I can’t play the sister card in there. They might ask for ID. It will look too weird. You go on your own. Find Jared. I’ll wait for you two at that deli we walked past.”

Ema didn’t hesitate or look behind her. She headed off campus while I continued to make my way to the admissions office. I had hoped to just get a pass and move on, but that was not about to happen. I had to fill out forms. I had to show my current ID. I had to schedule a campus tour at three o’clock and an interview at four.

“Would it be possible for me to walk around?” I asked when the paperwork was done. “I just want to experience the campus on my own a little.”

The lady behind the desk frowned at me and then said, “Come with me a moment.”

Uh-oh. I followed her down a wood-paneled corridor. Oil portraits of stern men, former headmasters, looked down on me disapprovingly. They seemed to say, “You don’t belong here,” and today, at least, it was hard to argue.

The receptionist stopped by a door and took a long look at me. “You’re tall,” she said.

I wasn’t sure how to reply to that, so I didn’t.

She opened the door and pulled out a blue blazer. “The school has a strict dress code. Didn’t you read that in the literature?”

“I must have missed it,” I said.

“Luckily you’re wearing a collared shirt. Here’s a tie.”

I thanked her. The jacket was a little snug, but it would do. I threw the tie around my neck and began to tie it as we headed back to her desk. She gave me a visitor’s pass and told me to wear it on my lapel. I did.

I checked the time. Jared’s Comparative Lit class would be letting out in two minutes. I grabbed a more detailed campus map from the admissions office and tried not to hurry outside. Jared’s class was in room 111, Feagles Hall. That was four buildings down on the right.

I hurried over, doing an awkward walk-run, and arrived with a few seconds to spare. The bell in the steeple chimed. I could hear the scuff of chairs on wood. The students started to exit. I leaned against the wall near room 111 and waited. Mr. Casual. Mr. Just Minding My Own Business.

Twelve boys exited the classroom. I had seen a picture of Jared Lowell. None of the faces matched. Jared had also been described as my height, but none of the students were over six feet tall. I still waited, still leaning against the wall as though I was holding it up, hoping that maybe he was just a straggler.

A few minutes later the teacher came out. By now the corridor was empty except for Mr. Casual. The teacher turned to me. “May I help you?”

I was going to ask him whether Jared Lowell had been to class, but I already knew the answer. If I asked where Jared was, well, hadn’t I learned my lesson about asking questions haphazardly? I said no thank you and moved on my way.

Now what?

When I stepped outside, I was struck anew by how spectacular this campus was. How cool it must be to go to school here. The campus’s green was one thing, but down the hill, the water sparkled in the sunlight. I wasn’t sure what waterway that was—the Atlantic Ocean maybe?—but students were in crew boats rowing in perfect symmetry. The whole place felt upper class and rich. I expected a foxhunt or polo match to start up.

Maybe Jared was sick today. He lived, I knew thanks to Spoon, on the second floor of Barna House. I could go and see if he was there. The other option was to . . . to what? I could go find Ema at the deli, but then it might be harder to come back on campus without a lot of questions.

Might as well give it a try. I didn’t see where there was much to lose.

Barna House had to be the newest building at Farnsworth. While the other buildings were all stately brick, this was sleek one-way glass. I tried the door. Locked. You needed a key card to get inside. I waited about ten seconds. A student opened the door from the inside. I smiled, held the door for him, and entered.

I’m a master at the art of the break-in.

Two boys were playing Ping-Pong on a Wii connected to a giant-screen TV. They still wore jackets and ties, though the ties were loosened to the point where they might serve better as belts. Groups of boys sat on either

side of the combatants, cheering them on with a gusto I normally associated with live football games. There were oohs and ahhs and trash-talking.

I headed up to the second floor. I didn't know the room number, but as it turned out, I didn't need to. The names were right on the doors. I started down the corridor. I was surprised that all the rooms were singles. I had always pictured prep school students as having roommates.

The third door read JARED LOWELL and his graduation year. He was indeed a senior. I knocked on the door and waited.

"So who are you really?"

I turned to the voice. It was Blond Mop. He wore only a towel around his waist. The blond mop was wet and pasted to his forehead. I assumed that he had just gotten out of the shower.

He was waiting for my reply.

"My name is Mickey Bolitar. I'm looking for Jared. I don't mean him any harm."

"So why are you looking for him?"

"It's kind of a long story."

He just stood there dripping in his towel and waited.

"You saw my friend," I said.

"The goth girl?"

"Right. She's a friend of his. Online friend anyway. He suddenly stopped communicating. She was worried about him."

He frowned. "You came all this way for that?"

It did sound pretty lame, but I said, "Yes."

"And you came with her because . . . ?"

"She's my friend. I'm trying to help her."

He stood there in his towel, no shirt, water dripping off the mop of hair. "Is she some kind of a cyberstalker or something?"

"No. Look, I just need to see him and make sure he's okay."

"Just because he stopped texting her back or whatever?"

"There's more to it than that. But all I need to do is make sure he's okay."

"That's weird," the kid said. "You get that, right?"

"I do," I said.

He took a deep breath. This was surreal, talking to this preppy boy just standing there in his towel. "Do you play basketball?" he asked me.

You get this question a lot when you're six-four. "Yes."

"Me too. My name is Tristan Wanatick. I'm the point guard on the team here. Jared and I are co-captains. Seniors. It's our last year. We were supposed to have a great season."

I felt a small chill. "Supposed to?"

"We still will," Tristan said, trying to sound defiant but not quite getting there. "I mean, he said he'll be back."

"Jared?"

"Yeah."

"So he's not at school?"

Blond Mop shook his head.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"Something happened."

Another chill, bigger this time. "What?"

"I don't know. Some kind of family emergency. He left school a few days ago. Right in the middle of the semester. More than that—right at the start of basketball season."

"Where did he go?"

"Home."

"And you don't know why?"

"All I know is it was something sudden," he said. "But if Jared is missing basketball, it has to be something really, really bad."

CHAPTER 24

I promised Tristan I would let him know if I learned anything.

There was nothing more for us to do here. Ema and I caught the next bus back. I headed straight to school for basketball practice. It felt great, of course, to disappear in the sweat and strain and beauty. I sometimes wondered what my life would be without having the court as a place to escape.

When I got out, I was surprised to see a familiar car waiting for me. Uncle Myron's.

He lowered the window. "Get in," he said.

"Something wrong?"

"You wanted to see your mother, right?"

"Right."

"Get in."

He didn't have to tell me twice. I circled around and hopped into the front passenger seat. Myron pulled away.

"How did you get permission?"

"You said it was important."

"It is."

Myron nodded. "I explained that to Christine."

Christine Shippee ran the Coddington Rehabilitation Center, where my mother was being treated for her addiction. Christine had told me in no uncertain terms that my mother would not be allowed any visitors, including her only child, for at least another two weeks.

“And she accepted that?” I asked.

“No. She said that you couldn’t come.”

“So how—?”

“Your mother isn’t in jail, Mickey. She’s in rehab. I told her that we were pulling her out of the program if she doesn’t let you see her.”

Whoa, I thought. “What did Christine say to that?”

I saw Myron’s grip on the steering wheel tighten. “She said that we’d have to find your mother a new facility.”

“What?”

“You said it was important.”

“It is.”

“So understand: Christine said that if we broke their protocol—if you saw her—then your mother would get thrown out.”

I sat back.

“Well?” he asked.

“Well, what?”

“What do you want to do, Mickey? Do we go and see your mother right now? Or do we let her stay in the program and get the help she needs?”

I thought about it. He made the right turn and up ahead, not more than another mile, was the Coddington Rehabilitation Center.

“What do you want to do?” Myron asked again.

I turned toward him. “I want to see my mother.”

“Even if that means getting her thrown out of the program?”

I sat back, crossed my arms, and said with more confidence than I really had: “Even if.”

CHAPTER 25

“I don’t understand this,” Christine Shippee said.

“I just need to talk to her. It won’t take long.”

“She’s going through withdrawal. You know what that is?”

“Yes.”

“She’s in tremendous pain. Her body is craving the drug. You have no idea how hard this part is on a person.”

I had learned in life to compartmentalize. I understood what she was saying. More than that, I felt her words. Physically. I felt them like a hard blow to the stomach. But I had come to a horrible realization. This wasn’t my mother’s first stint in rehab. Kitty Bolitar, my mother, had gone through the pain of withdrawal before, just a few months ago. Kitty had convinced everybody that she was fine and then she had gotten out and smiled at me and taken me to school and promised to make me my favorite dinner with my favorite garlic bread and then I went to school and she went to a motel and shot that poison back into her veins.

That was why we were back here.

“It didn’t work last time.”

“That’s not uncommon,” Christine Shippee told me. “You know that.”

“I do.”

“Mickey, we are doing what’s best for her. But I meant it. If you insist on seeing her tonight, you will break our protocol. We can no longer be her facility.”

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

Christine Shippee looked toward Myron. “He’s a minor. This is your call, not his.”

Uncle Myron turned to me and met my eye. I kept my gaze on him. “You’re sure?” he asked me.

I was.

Christine Shippee shook her head. “You know where her room is,” she said in a voice of both exhaustion and exasperation. “Myron, you can stay with me and sign the release papers.”

She hit a button and I heard the familiar buzz of the door. I opened it and started down the narrow corridor. When I found my mother, she was asleep. Her ankles and wrists were restrained. Still, I felt somewhat lucky. I had caught her in a peaceful moment, deep sleep, escape from the pain.

For a few moments I stood in the doorway and watched her. She had given up her tennis career—the fame, the fortune, the passion, all of it—to keep me. She had loved me and taken care of me my whole life until . . . until she couldn’t anymore. I have heard that the human spirit is indomitable, that it can’t be beaten or destroyed, and if you want something bad enough, the human spirit is impossibly strong.

That’s total crap.

My mother wasn’t weak. My mother loved me with everything that she had. But sometimes a person can break, just like Bat Lady’s stupid refrigerator. Sometimes they break and maybe they can’t be fixed.

“Mickey?”

Kitty Bolitar smiled at me, and for a moment, her face beamed. She was my mom again. I ran over to the side of the bed, transformed suddenly into a little boy. I collapsed to my knees and lowered my head onto her shoulder and then I, too, broke down. I sobbed. I sobbed on her shoulder for a very long time. I could hear her making a gentle shushing sound, a sound she made for me a hundred times before, trying to comfort me. I waited for her to put her hand on my head, but the restraints wouldn’t allow it.

“It’s okay, Mickey. Shh, it’s going to be okay.”

But I didn’t believe it. Worse, I didn’t believe her.

I put myself together a piece at a time. When I could finally speak, I said, “I need to ask you something.”

“What is it, sweetheart?”

I lifted my head. I wanted to look into her eyes when I asked. I wanted to see her reaction. "It's about Dad."

She winced. My parents loved each other. Oh, sure, right, lots of people's parents do. But not like this. Their love was embarrassing. Their love was complete and whole and the problem with that kind of love, the problem with two becoming one, is what happens when one dies?

By definition, so must the other.

"What about your father?" she asked.

"Why did you have him cremated?"

"What?" She sounded more confused than shocked.

"I saw the paper you signed. I'm not mad or anything. I get it. But I don't know why—"

"What are you talking about? He wasn't cremated."

"Yes, he was. You signed for it."

Her eyes blazed now, boring into mine. I don't think I had ever seen them this clear. "Mickey, listen to me. We buried your father in Los Angeles. I never had him cremated. Why would you think such a thing?"

She waited for the answer. I believed her. She hadn't been in a drug stupor or anything like that. I could see it in her face. And I could see something else in her face too.

We had all been pretending.

My mother wasn't going to get better. She was broken. Christine Shippee might be able to repair her for a little while, but she would just break again. There was only one hope for her. I knew that. When my father died, she died too. That was why I was willing to risk her treatment. That was why I didn't care about the threats to throw her out of rehab. Rehab wouldn't do any good. Right now, without my father, you were sticking a tiny bandage on a limb amputation.

My mother was lost to me forever. There was only one hope.

"Mom?"

"Yes."

I kept my tone strong. "I need you to get better."

"Oh, I will," she said, and, man, it sounded like a lie now.

"No, not like that. Not like last time. Things have changed."

"I don't understand, Mickey."

“Get better, Mom,” I said, standing up now. “Because the next time I come back, I’m bringing Dad.”

CHAPTER 26

I hurried out then. Christine Shippee said, “Wait, where are you going?”

“No,” I said.

“What?”

I spun back to her. “She stays. I was only in there a few minutes. Please.”

She looked at me, then at Myron. Myron shrugged.

“Please,” I said again. “Just trust me, okay?”

Christine Shippee nodded. “Okay, but, Mickey?”

“Yes?”

“You can’t do this again.”

“Don’t worry,” I said. “I won’t be back until everything has changed.”

• • •

I was in school, on my way to practice the next day, when Rachel sent me a text: **In Philadelphia with my dad.**

I typed back: **Sounds like fun.**

I told him I knew the truth about my mom.

I nodded toward the screen. **How did it go?**

There was a small delay before she typed back: **Not well. Yet. But it chased the lie from the room.**

I smiled. **Good.**

Be back late tonight. Can you update me in the morning?

Sure.

Great. My place early AM. See you then. Take care.

I wrote back, because I'm the master of smooth: **You too.**

I stared down at the phone until a voice jarred me back to the present.

"What are you smiling at?"

I looked up too quickly. "Nothing."

Ema frowned. "Right."

"It was nothing. Someone just sent me a joke."

"One of your new jock friends? I bet it was a riot."

"What's up?"

"Guess who found us a Betamax machine so we can watch that tape," Ema said.

"You?"

"Nope. Spoon. If you can skip chilling with your hoops bros tonight, maybe we could go to the hospital and watch the tape together."

"I'm there," I said.

"Goodie."

Ema took off. I got ready for practice. A bunch of the guys were joking around and I joined in and I enjoyed it and the heck with Ema and her attitude. I was allowed to have a little fun, wasn't I? I spotted Brandon lacing up his sneakers in the corner. He looked over at me and tilted his head as though asking, *Well?*

I walked over to him. "Let me ask you something," I said.

"What?"

"It's about Buck."

"What about him?"

"From what I understand, his parents are divorced."

"Right. I think they split three, four years ago, I don't know."

"Was it hard on Buck?"

Brandon squinted at me. "What difference does that make?"

"I'm just finding this all a little convenient."

"What?"

"Buck has lived his whole life in this town, right?"

"Right."

"So suddenly, a few weeks into his senior year, he has to leave his friends and school and live with his mother?"

Brandon shrugged. "I'm not a lawyer, but they have joint custody or something."

"So when was the last time you talked to him?"

"I don't know. A few days before he left."

"You haven't spoken to him since?"

"No."

"No text or e-mail, nothing?"

"A text, I think," Brandon said. "Maybe an e-mail."

"No good-bye?"

Brandon seemed to get it now. "No," he said. "No real good-bye."

"And you don't find that odd? You guys were friends from childhood. He moves away and never says good-bye?"

Still seated, Brandon looked up at me. "What are you getting at, Mickey?"

"The timing," I said.

Brandon said nothing.

"Look," I said, "I've only known Buck a short time. He's been nothing but this horrible bully. That's all I know of him. But I want to show you something."

"What?"

I started down the row of lockers into the hallway. Every high school has that sports trophy display case. I brought him over there and pointed to the photograph of last year's team on a plaque as county champions. I pointed at Buck.

"What?" Brandon said.

"You don't see it?"

"No. What is it?"

"Maybe because you saw him every day. I didn't. But take a good look at him."

"I am," Brandon said. He was very tall, so he bent down for a closer look. "What am I supposed to be seeing?"

"This picture was taken a year ago. It barely looks like the same Buck I know. This guy has to be thirty pounds smaller."

Brandon stayed hunched over and studied the photo. "So? Lots of guys grow between junior and senior year."

"That much?"

“Sure.” But I could hear the doubt in his own voice. “Come to think of it . . .”

“What?”

“Buck had a great baseball season. The extra strength really made a difference in his slugging percentage . . .” Brandon’s voice drifted off. Then he gave me a sharp look.

“What?” I said.

“You’re supposed to be helping Troy.”

“That’s what I’m doing.”

“It sounds more like you’re trying to make a case against Buck.”

“I’m not making a case for or against anyone. I’m trying to find out the truth. But suppose there’s a connection between what happened to Buck and what happened to Troy.”

“Like what?”

“I don’t know yet. But suppose Buck got a positive drug test too. Wouldn’t that maybe explain why he suddenly changed schools and doesn’t communicate with anyone?”

Brandon looked off, considering it.

“What?” I said.

“It was always hard for Buck,” Brandon said.

“How so?”

“The pressure on him. Being Randy’s younger brother. It was more than just a shadow he couldn’t escape. It was a shadow that smothered him. I know you hate him, and I can’t say you don’t have your reasons. But a lot of Buck’s bullying behavior was because he always felt second best.”

I arched an eyebrow. “His parents didn’t hug him enough?”

“Hey, you’re the one who raised this. But think about it. In the past few years, Buck has had to live with the superstar brother. That pressure had to be enormous.”

I could feel my cheeks redden. “No, it didn’t,” I said.

“What?”

“That’s an excuse.” I tried to keep my breathing even, but Brandon took a step back. “My father had to live with a superstar brother too, remember?”

“I do.”

Brandon looked at his feet.

“What?” I said.

“I don’t mean to be cruel, Mickey, but how did that work out for him?”

His words landed right on my chin. “Low blow, Brandon.”

“Not my intent,” Brandon said.

“And my father didn’t turn into a bully who called girls cows or threatened to beat up the new kid.”

“No,” Brandon said gently. “He didn’t.”

“I hear a but.”

“Forget it.”

“My father did good work. He helped the needy.”

“And how about his relationship with his superstar brother?”

I couldn’t believe that he was still going there. “When he and his brother had their falling-out, Myron wasn’t a superstar anymore. He’d already blown out his knee. Myron’s career was over.”

“You’re right,” Brandon said. But I could hear in his tone that he just wanted to move on. “Forget that. I’m not making excuses for Buck, but let’s be real here. Buck was under a lot of pressure to perform, to live up to the hype of being Randy’s brother. Then you add to that all the problems at home, his parents’ divorce . . .”

“And his huge weight gains,” I added.

“So I don’t get it, Mickey. What are you trying to say?”

“I don’t know. I just wonder if it’s connected. Buck suddenly leaves town. Troy tests positive for steroids.”

“I don’t see how they’re related.”

“Neither do I,” I said. Then I added: “Yet.”

CHAPTER 27

When I stepped into Spoon's hospital room, Ema was already there. Mr. Spindel, Spoon's father and the school janitor, was up on a ladder, fiddling with wires behind the television.

"Almost done, Dad?" Spoon asked.

"I don't see why you need this here."

"I told you. Rachel has a copy of an old *Smurfs* show on Betamax. We all want to watch it."

Mr. Spindel stepped down from the ladder with a frown on his face.

"That has to be the lamest lie I have ever heard."

"Or maybe," Spoon said, "it's something R rated and completely inappropriate."

Mr. Spindel sighed. "Sounds better than the Smurfs." He finished tightening the wire. "All yours," he said. He grabbed his stepladder and left the room.

I looked at the old machine. "Where did you get this?" I asked him.

"From home," Spoon said. "Where else?"

"You still have one?"

"Of course. While the Betamax had lost almost its entire market share to the VHS tape by 1988, Sony continued to manufacture them until 2002."

"Ooookay," I said.

Ema put the tape into the Betamax. She pressed the play button. I sat on the right front corner of the bed. Ema took the left. We left enough space between us for Spoon to see.

The hospital TV was mounted on the wall in front of us. Right now, the screen crackled in gray-and-white static. We waited. Ten seconds later, the picture cleared.

“Where is that?” Spoon asked.

Ema and I shared a glance. “That’s the tunnel.”

“The one under Bat Lady’s house?”

“Yes,” Ema said. “In fact, this is pretty close to where we found the tape.”

“Cool beans,” Spoon said.

The camera was pointed straight down the corridor, coming from a spot relatively close to the house and aiming at a spot more toward the garage. For ten seconds, nothing happened. Then the camera gave a little jerk and we heard a familiar voice say, “Oh, I’m so clumsy.”

From behind the camera, Lizzy Sobek appeared.

She was wearing that long white gown, her gray hair down to her waist. She looked younger—it was hard to say how much—but her skin was less wrinkled. She turned back and looked at the camera. “Is it on, Dylan?”

Spoon said, “‘Dylan’?”

“Dylan Shaykes,” I said. “That’s the name of the guy with the shaved head.”

“The one who follows you in the black car?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Why does that name ring a bell?” Spoon asked.

“From old milk cartons. He disappeared twenty-five years ago. There were a lot of stories on him recently—”

“And now he . . . ?”

“Works for the Abeona Shelter,” I said.

“Like us.”

“Shh,” Ema said.

On the screen, Lizzy Sobek turned her back to the camera, spread her arms, and said, “Welcome.”

We heard distant voices, but we couldn’t see anything.

A voice from behind the camera, Dylan Shaykes’s, said, “You’re blocking me.”

“Oh,” Lizzy Sobek said. “Sorry.”

She stepped to the side. I squinted at the screen. Four kids—or maybe it was five or six, hard to tell from the distance—appeared down the hall. They stumbled closer to the camera.

“You’re safe now,” Lizzy told them.

One of the kids stepped forward in a challenging way. He put his fists on his hips, almost Superman style. “Who are you? Why are we here?”

I heard Ema gasp. “Mickey?”

I nodded, unable to speak.

The boy looked to be about twelve years old. He moved closer to the camera—close enough that we could see that his hair was sandy blond. The picture quality wasn’t good enough to see the green eyes, but I didn’t need to know the color. The facial features were all the same. I would guess he was fifteen or twenty years younger, but there was no doubt in my mind.

It was Luther. My Butcher.

“We will explain everything to you in due time,” Lizzy said.

But Luther was having none of it. “I want to know now.”

The other children moved forward. One looked younger than Luther by maybe five years. The little boy was scared and confused. Luther threw his arm around him protectively.

“It’s okay,” Lizzy said in a gentle voice. “No one can ever hurt you again.”

Another child, the one on the far right, started to cry. Lizzy moved toward him, her arms spread. He ran into her arms. She stroked his hair. The fourth child did the same. Lizzy took him in her grasp too.

“What the . . . ?” Ema asked.

“It’s a rescue,” Spoon said.

“Shh.”

I stared at the screen. Still comforting the two children, Lizzy looked toward Luther and the other boy. Luther shook his head. His grip on the other boy tightened.

“It’s okay,” she said again.

A tear ran down Luther’s cheek.

“You’re safe here. No one will harm either of you.”

From behind the camera, I heard Dylan say, “Uh-oh, I think we have company.”

Lizzy turned toward him. I could see something like fear on her face.
“Get them to the safe room. Hurry.”

Then she turned back and said one word that made my whole world crumble anew:

“Brad?”

And then the voice, at once so familiar and yet so different: “I’m right here.”

My teenage father stepped forward.

Ema said, “Oh my God. Is that . . . ?”

Tears were running freely down my face. I nodded.

“Get them fed and situated,” Lizzy said to the teenager who would one day become my father.

“Yes, ma’am.”

Lizzy, her face set, started back toward the camera. She walked past it and disappeared. For another second or two, I could see them all—the two children she had been comforting, Luther with his arm around the other scared boy, and my father. They all stood there, completely still, and then, with a snap, the screen went black.

CHAPTER 28

For a few moments, none of us moved. We just sat and stared at the TV screen.

“I have more information to use now,” Spoon said. “Luther disappeared with three other boys approximately, what, twenty years ago. There has to be something about it on the web.”

I nodded numbly. I did everything numbly. I could barely talk or think since we had watched the tape.

“Mickey?”

“Yeah, Spoon.”

“We will find out what happened to your father, okay? I promise.”

Look who was suddenly making the promises. I nodded. Numbly.

Ema took my hand. “Are you okay?”

Another numb nod. Then I said, “It’s just . . .” I stopped myself, but there I sat, Ema holding my hand, Spoon looking at me from his bed with such concern. “After my dad was killed, I didn’t look at any pictures of him. You know? It just hurt too much. I don’t know. I couldn’t handle it.”

“We understand,” Ema said.

“Now I not only see him,” I said, pointing toward the screen, “but I see him on a video made before I was even born. So it’s just . . .”

No more words would come out.

“Totally get it,” Spoon said.

“Absolutely,” Ema added.

Ema and I were still holding hands. It felt good.

“Perhaps,” Spoon said, “a distraction would be nice.” He opened his laptop and started typing. “As you may remember, Jared Lowell lives on Adiona Island, off the coast of Massachusetts. It requires two buses and a ferry to get to. Since the only day in the next week where you don’t have either school or basketball practice is tomorrow, I took the liberty of booking two tickets. You’ll have to leave early again in the morning.”

“Wait, I can’t go tomorrow,” Ema said. “I promised my mom I’d go to her show in New York.”

“Maybe that’s better,” I said.

“What?”

“I can find Jared and talk to him without you there. Maybe he’ll be more forthcoming.”

Ema frowned. “You’re kidding, right?”

“No, he’s right,” Spoon said. “Perhaps it is best you don’t go.”

“So Mickey goes alone?” Ema asked.

Then I remembered my texts with Rachel. “Not alone,” I said. “I’ll have backup.”

CHAPTER 29

I admit that this action—coming all the way out to this island—seemed extreme.

Ema and I had already wasted half a day heading up to the Farnsworth School trying to find Jared Lowell. That was one thing. It made some sense. But now we stood on the ferry, watching Adiona Island grow larger as we approached, hoping against hope that maybe Jared was here and we would find him and this mystery would be over.

I shook my head thinking about it.

“What’s wrong?” Rachel asked me.

The wind blew her hair across her face. I wanted to reach out and push it back, tuck it behind her ear, but of course, I didn’t. “What are the odds he’s even here?”

“Jared? He lives here, right?”

“Right.”

“And that guy you met up at the prep school said he’d gone home, right?”

“Right.”

“So I’d say the odds are pretty good.”

I shook my head again.

“You don’t agree?” she asked.

“Do you think we’re going to just knock on his door and find him home?” I frowned. “It’s never that easy for us.”

Rachel smiled. “True.”

But that was exactly what happened.

The ferry was loaded with two classes of people. The crowd on the top deck looked like they were going to a cricket match or an equestrian show. Some of the men had sweaters tied around their shoulders. Others wore tweed jackets. The women wore tennis skirts or summer dresses in loud pink and green. They spoke with jutting jaws and used the word *summer* as a verb. One guy wore an ascot. He called his wife “sassy.” I thought it was a personality description, you know, like she was sassy, but after eavesdropping I realized that was her name. Sassy with a capital S.

The other class, on the deck below, were what I assumed were day workers or domestics. I had seen the same expressions, the same slumped shoulders on the bus going from Kasselton back to Newark. I didn’t know much about Adiona Island, but judging by the ferry, it was a playground for the old-money jet-setter crowd.

When we got off the ferry, Rachel had the GPS app on her smartphone ready.

“The Lowells live on Discepolo Street,” she said. “It’s less than a mile from here. I guess we should walk.”

It was a good guess, especially since there were no other options. There was nothing by the dock area. No taxis. No car rental. No restaurant or deli or even snack machine. Almost everyone else had cars at the dock. The lower deck hopped into the back of pickups. The upper tier had roadsters and antique cars and brands you normally associate with money.

In the distance we could see fancy homes along the water. They were big, of course, but not huge or new. They were more what one might call “stately” rather than some nouveau palace. Half a mile down the road we passed a ritzy tennis club, the kind where everyone wore only whites, like they were at Wimbledon or something.

No one else walked, so we got a few odd looks. Rachel, of course, got a few lingering glances, but she was used to that.

“How did it go with your father?” I asked.

“It’ll be okay,” she said.

“Are you mad at me?”

“For telling me about my mother?”

I nodded.

“No. I get it. My father thinks it was the wrong move. He thinks I’ll feel guilty for the rest of my life.”

“Is he right?”

Rachel shrugged. “I feel guilty now. I don’t know how I’ll feel tomorrow. But your uncle was right: I’d rather live with the guilt than the lie.” She pointed up the hill. “We take that left.”

When we did, we entered a whole different part of the island. If the island were also a ferry, we were now on the lower deck. Rather than lush trees, row houses now lined both sides of the streets. The plain brick and cookie-cutter architecture indicated that we were no longer among the hoity-toity. That was the thing with fancy islands for the rich. Someone had to work the electric and the water and the cable. Someone had to mow the expansive lawns and teach the tennis and clean the pools.

This eyesore of a street, tucked away where no one could really see it, was where these workers and all-year inhabitants lived.

“Are you sure we’re on the right street?” I asked.

“I am,” Rachel said. She pointed at one of the brick buildings. “It’s that one—third on the left.”

I shook my head. “Jared goes to an expensive prep school. That fits with this island.”

“But it doesn’t fit with this street,” Rachel said.

“He plays basketball,” I said. “It looks like he’s very good.”

“A scholarship kid?”

“Makes sense.” We reached a cracked walkway made of concrete and started toward the door. “Now what?” I asked.

“We knock,” Rachel said.

So we did—and Jared Lowell answered.

He was tall and good-looking, just like in the photographs. He wore a flannel shirt, jeans, and work boots. He looked at me first, then at Rachel. His eyes stayed on Rachel.

Big surprise.

A smile came to his lips.

“Can I help you?”

Rachel asked, “Are you Jared Lowell?”

“That’s right. Who are you?”

“This is Mickey Bolitar,” she said. He turned and gave me a brief though polite nod. “My name is Rachel Caldwell.”

The names clearly didn’t mean anything to him. From inside the house, I heard a woman’s voice shout, “Jared? Who’s there?”

“I got it, Ma.”

“I didn’t ask if you got it. I asked who’s there.”

Jared looked at us as though waiting for the answer. I said, “We’re here on behalf of Ema Beaumont.”

I wasn’t sure what to suspect. The most likely answer to all of this remained the most obvious one: Ema had been catfished. This guy, this Jared, had no idea who she was or what we were talking about. Still, this visit would confirm that fact, and we could be on our way.

In another sense, our mission was over the moment Jared Lowell opened that door. Jared Lowell wasn’t missing. We had found him. He was safe. The rest—whether he was the guy who’d befriended Ema online or not—was irrelevant.

So I expected him to say, “Who?” or “I don’t know any Ema Beaumont” or something along those lines. But that was not what happened. Instead his face drained of all color.

“Jared?”

It was his mom again.

“Just some friends from town,” he shouted back. “Everything’s fine.”

He stepped outside and closed the door behind him. He hurried down the cracked-concrete path. Rachel and I caught up to him.

“What are you doing here?” Jared asked.

“We’re friends of Ema’s,” I said.

“So?”

“You know who she is, right?”

He didn’t reply.

“Jared?”

“Yeah, I know who she is. So what?”

Jared looked at his front door as though expecting it to open. He picked up the pace. We kept up with him. When we reached the corner, he stopped abruptly.

“What’s this about?” Jared asked me. “I got to get to work at the club soon.”

Now that I had him in front of me, listening, I wasn't sure how to put it. "You, uh, had a relationship with her," I began.

"With Ema, you mean?"

"Yes."

He shrugged. "We communicated online, I guess."

"Just communicated?"

Jared looked over at Rachel, then back at me. "Why is this your business?"

Fair question.

Rachel said, "She's worried about you."

"Who?"

"Who do you think?" I snapped. "Ema."

"And how does any of this concern you two?"

"You were 'communicating'"—I made quote marks in the air—"online, right?"

"What if I was?"

"Well, Jared, you just stopped cold. Why?"

He shook his head slowly. "What's your name again? Never mind. This is really none of your business." He turned toward Rachel and his face softened. "No offense to you, Rachel, but I'm not sure it's your business either."

"Didn't forget *her* name," I mumbled.

"What?"

I stepped up to him. "You don't do that to a person," I said.

"Do what?"

"You don't just stop communicating with someone like that. You don't just disappear and not tell the other person. You don't just leave them hanging like that. It's mean."

"It's mean'?" he repeated, turning toward Rachel. "Is he for real?"

"I agree with him," Rachel said.

That made him swallow. "Wait, I did send her an e-mail. Maybe, I don't know, maybe it got stuck in her spam folder or something."

"Yeah," I said in a voice dripping with sarcasm, "that seems likely."

There was a sound that drew his attention. I looked behind me to see what it was. The front door opened. A woman I assumed was his mother was standing in the doorway. "Everything okay, Jared?"

“Fine, Ma.” Then in a quieter voice to us: “I have to go.”

I stepped in his path. I didn’t exactly block him, but the move definitely had some force behind it. “Wait a second,” I said. “The two of us came a long way.”

“For what?” he asked.

I looked at Rachel. She looked at me. I didn’t have an answer. Jared Lowell wasn’t missing. He wasn’t in danger. He was, it seemed, a jerk, but that didn’t make him in need of rescue.

“Why did you stop communicating with Ema?” I asked again.

“None of your business.”

Again his eyes drifted toward Rachel, and when they did, a cold realization entered my brain.

“Oh man,” I said.

“What?”

“When did you first see a picture of Ema?”

“What?”

A small seed of anger began to grow in my chest. “When did you first see what Ema looked like, Jared?”

He shrugged. “I don’t remember.”

“No?” I said. “So maybe—wild guess here—it was around the time you decided not to talk to her anymore?”

“I told you. We never talked.”

“E-mailed, texted, whatever. You know what I mean. Is that when you first saw her picture?”

But I saw something churning behind his eyes. “Yeah? So what of it?” He grabbed my arm and pulled me away from Rachel. He spoke in a soft voice.

“Dude, do you really blame me? I mean, look at the girl you’re with.”

I was actually cocking my fist when I remembered that his mom was still at the front door.

“Jared?” she called out.

“I’ll be there in a second, Ma.” He leaned close to me and kept his voice low. “Look, okay, maybe I should have told her better. Maybe I should have made it clearer, but really, it wasn’t a big thing.”

“It was to her.”

“That’s not my problem.”

“Yeah, Jared, it is.”

“What? Are you going to hit me, big man? Defend Ema’s honor?”

Man, I wanted to. I wanted to smack him good and hard. “You have no idea what a great person Ema is.”

“Then why don’t you date her?” He grinned. “I’d be happy to take Rachel off your hands.”

Rachel put her hand on my shoulder, her way of telling me to stay calm. “Not worth it,” she whispered.

“Look,” Jared said, “I’ll e-mail her, okay? I’ll let her know. You’re right about that. But, Mickey? You better get out of my face now, because one thing is for sure: This is none of your damned business.”

CHAPTER 30

I called Ema, but it went straight into her voice mail. I sent her a brief text: **Found Jared. He's safe. Call if you have any questions.**

"I blew it," I said to Rachel.

"How?"

"Got too aggressive."

"You were mad."

"It's just . . . when I think of Ema waiting by her computer . . ."

Rachel smiled. "You're sweet."

I shook my head. "I didn't even ask him the important question."

"That being?"

"Why is Jared home? Why isn't he still at school?"

"We didn't come to change his life," Rachel said. "We were supposed to find him. Mission accomplished."

I knew that she was speaking the truth. Jared had vanished—and we had found him. Period. The end.

But something felt very wrong about it.

When we arrived back home, I got a text from Brandon Foley: **Anything new on Troy's test?**

I thought about it. I simply was not buying that Buck's mother would suddenly be granted full custody and that he would have to move away. Sure, I had heard of some pretty strange arrangements in cases of divorce, but who would move a kid when he was seventeen years old and already into his final year of high school?

It *might* make sense in a vacuum—if that was all that had happened. But at the same time Buck decided to leave, his best friend and cohort in crime, Troy Taylor, failed a drug test.

Coincidence?

I didn't think so. Troy insisted that he's innocent, and most of the guys on the team seemed to believe him. I started drawing little lines in my head, trying to make things connect.

My brain started to hurt.

I needed more information, so as soon as I made sure Rachel was home safe and sound, I decided that it was time I had a heart-to-heart with Troy.

I was going to text him, but I didn't have his number. I guessed that I could ask Brandon for it, but I was already in the neighborhood. One of the few things I had learned was that there is no substitute for face-to-face. No, I'm not going to bemoan the smartphones or how we all constantly text or check social media. It is what it is. But when you want information, when you want to see whether a person is telling the truth or lying, there is nothing better than to look them in the eye and watch their body language.

At least, that was what I thought.

When I arrived at Troy's door, I hesitated before knocking. I had been here before. Sort of. Rachel had "distracted" Troy—ugh—so that Ema and I could break into Chief Taylor's home office off the back kitchen. Ah, good times. Now I was knocking on his front door, like a real visitor.

Suppose Chief Taylor answered the door?

No "suppose" about it. Two seconds after I knocked, the door opened. Chief Taylor, still in full uniform, appeared. His eyes narrowed when he spotted me on the stoop. "Mickey Bolitar?"

"Hi, Chief Taylor," I said too cheerfully.

"What do you want?"

"Is, uh, Troy home?"

Chief Taylor frowned at me a few more seconds. Then he stepped aside and said, "Troy is in the basement."

"Thank you." I wiped my feet a few hundred times on the welcome mat and stepped into the house. He gestured toward a door across the room. I opened it and started down the steps.

"Troy?"

Nothing.

The room was dark and silent. I kept moving down the stairs. An eerie glow started providing some illumination. When I reached the bottom step, I saw what it was. A video game with plenty of blood and guts was playing on the big-screen television. I spotted Troy lounging on a gamer chair. Headphones covered his ears. His finger danced across the game controller.

He still didn't know I was here. He was lost in the game, shooting, dodging, changing weapons. I had never gotten into the video game craze because when we were overseas I didn't have access to it. When we first moved back to the United States earlier in the year, I had tried to play them, but I wasn't very good. Like anything else, video games took practice. I'd started playing too late, and maybe this was a weakness of my own, but I didn't like to do things I wasn't good at.

"Troy?"

He still didn't hear me. I touched him on the shoulder. He jumped up, eyes wide, as though ready to attack. When he saw it was me, confusion crossed his face for a split second, but it was quickly replaced with his ready smile.

"Hey, Mickey."

I didn't know what to think of this guy.

"Hey," I said. "I wanted to talk to you."

He took off the headphones and put the controller down.

"Have a seat."

I sat in the gamer chair next to him. It felt odd, sitting in this dark room, the television providing the only light. On the screen, the game characters continued on as though nothing had happened. They ran and shot and dived and hid.

"So what's up?" Troy asked.

"I need to ask you about Buck."

That seemed to surprise him. "What about him?"

"You two are close, right?"

"Best friends."

"Were you surprised when he moved away?"

"Surprised? I was more like shocked." Troy turned toward me a little more. "Why?"

"It's just odd," I said.

"What is?"

“You were close to Buck, so maybe you didn’t see it. He put on a ton of size in the off-season.”

“He was lifting hard,” Troy said.

“That might be all it is, then.”

Troy’s eyes narrowed like his father’s had upstairs. “But you don’t think so?”

“I just wonder. He showed all the signs of steroid use. Increased size. He was nasty and aggressive. I heard he had a really good baseball season.”

“Great season,” Troy said. “He showed a lot of improvement.”

“Too much improvement?” I asked.

Troy looked troubled by something.

“What?” I said.

“You think Buck may have been taking steroids.”

“Yes.”

“But what would that have to do with me?”

“I don’t know. Maybe nothing.”

Troy looked away.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Nothing.”

“Troy, you asked for my help.”

“I know. But I didn’t want that help to come at the expense of a friend.”

“That’s not what I’m doing.”

“No?”

“I’m trying to find out the truth here,” I said. “That’s all. So what’s troubling you?”

Troy took a deep breath. “Buck felt threatened by you.”

I leaned back. “Me?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Look, we treated you wrong. I told you that.”

“What does that have to do with Buck?”

Troy started fiddling with the controller in his hand. “I think one reason we gave you so much flack was because, well, we know how good a player you are.”

I said nothing.

“The five of us had been starters on the basketball team forever. But one of us was about to lose his starting position to you. It wouldn’t have been Brandon, the center, or me, the point guard—”

He didn’t finish the thought. I finished it for him.

“It would have been Buck.”

Troy nodded. “Think about it. You know all the pressure he was already under with his brother being a superstar, right?”

“Yes.”

“Now add you in the equation. It got to him. Bad. To lose your starting job in your last year . . .”

I saw where Troy was going with this. “So you think he took steroids.”

“I’m not saying that. He’s my friend. But at some point, Brandon and I wanted to lay off you. We knew that you could help us win. That’s all that really mattered to me.” He leaned closer to me. “But, see, I would still be a starter. Buck was the one on the fringe.”

We sat there, in the dark, and watched the video game characters run rampant.

“He hasn’t called me back,” Troy said.

“Buck?”

“Yeah. He sent me a few texts, but he won’t talk to me.”

“Why do you think that is?”

Troy shrugged. “I don’t know.”

My cell phone rang. It was Ema. I got myself out of the chair and headed over to a quiet corner. “Hello?”

“You found Jared?”

“Yeah,” I said. “Where are you?”

“We just got back home.”

“I’m on my way.”

CHAPTER 31

I told Ema everything about our meeting on Adiona Island with Jared Lowell.

She listened intently, as she always did. We were sitting in the kitchen of the enormous mansion she calls home. Niles, the family butler, was puttering around the house, but he knew better than to get in our way. Ema's mom, the actress whose fan board had started this whole thing, was still in New York.

When I finished, Ema didn't speak. She just sat at the kitchen table. Her hands were folded in front of her. She stared at them. I started to reach my hand across, but I stopped. Her body language was all wrong.

"Ema?" I said.

"He's lying."

I waited for her to say more. She kept her eyes on her hands. She started twisting the silver skull ring on her right hand around and around. Finally she said, "I want to show you something."

She took out her smartphone and started playing with the buttons. I sat quietly. "I don't like doing this," she said.

"Doing what?"

"Showing you this e-mail. It's the last one Jared sent me."

"You don't have to . . ."

"I know that. And, yeah, it's really personal. That's why I don't really want to do it. But I need you to understand. Okay?"

"Yeah, okay."

With a deep sigh, Ema handed me her phone. The cover was black with silver studs. The girl was consistent, I had to say that. She had blown up the screen so I couldn't see the address or the top of the e-mail. I didn't scroll. If she had wanted me to see the whole thing, she would have left it alone.

I can't wait to see you. I can't wait for this all to be over and to tell you what's in my heart and how I've changed. You changed me, Ema. I have made so many mistakes and there is still one more thing to do, but once that's over, I promise it will all be behind me. We will be together if you'll accept me.

I looked up. "That's it?"

"That's all I want to show you."

"What's with the 'if you'll accept me'?" I asked.

"I don't know."

I handed her back the phone.

"But does that sound like a guy who had a change of heart?"

"No, but you know how guys are."

"I do," Ema said with a frown.

I thought about it. "Jared wrote that he still has one more thing to do and then he can put it all behind him. What was he talking about?"

"I don't know."

I mulled it over for a few seconds. "He left school. Do you think it has to do with that?"

"I guess it has to," Ema said. "School was important to him. He's as basketball crazy as you are." She checked her phone and slid it back into her pocket. "Did he tell you why he was home?"

"No."

"Did you ask?"

"No."

"Why not?"

I remembered what Rachel had said. "We didn't come to change his life. Our mission was to find him and make sure he was safe."

My words came out with more sting than I intended. This all felt strange for some reason. Seeing that e-mail had thrown me off guard a little. Ema, a

girl I cared about a whole lot, had this big relationship with some guy she was really into and with whom she exchanged words of . . . love?

I wanted not to care. But I didn't like it.

For a second—a half second, maybe less—I considered asking her when she had first sent him her picture. Had it been late in the game, maybe right after she received this e-mail? I know how cruel that sounded, but I had seen the way Jared looked at Rachel.

Was that it? Was the answer that simple—and that superficial?

I started thinking about that again and now my emotions turned back to rage at Jared Lowell.

But I stayed quiet.

“He may still be in danger,” Ema said. “He could be covering something up. He could be trying to protect me.”

“Protect you how?”

“There was something going on in his life. Something he was trying to get away from so that he could be with me. But suppose he couldn't? Suppose he tried to but, whatever it was, he couldn't escape it.”

We sat there in silence. Finally I asked, “What was he trying to escape?”

“I don't know,” she said. “But maybe we still need to find out.”

CHAPTER 32

It was dark when I headed home. Niles offered me a ride, but I wanted to walk. I needed to clear my head. The walk home would do me good. Ema's house was not only ginormous but it sat atop a ginormous plot of land. I started down a driveway that had to be a quarter mile long.

When I reached the bottom of the hill, I spotted the familiar car across the street. It was black with tinted windows. Its license plate number was A30432. During the Holocaust, prisoners in Auschwitz had numbers tattooed on their arms. Lizzy Sobek had survived that death camp. Her tattoo number?

A30432.

The car was here for me. I didn't walk toward it. I would let them make the first move.

The back door opened. The man I had called Shaved Head stepped out. He wore a dark suit and tie. I knew now that his name was Dylan Shaykes. As a young child, curly-haired Dylan Shaykes had vanished, never to be seen again. I didn't know what happened or how he had joined Abeona, but he had been watching me from the beginning.

The black car drove away, leaving Dylan alone on the street with me.

"Funny thing," I called to him.

"What?"

"I've never seen the driver. Who is he?"

Dylan didn't answer. I didn't expect him to. "Let's take a walk," he said.

We started down the street together. Neither of us spoke for the first hundred yards or so. We were waiting each other out. It was odd. I had always thought my . . . what was he anyway? My mentor? My immediate superior? I didn't know. But I always thought that my relationship with a guy like this would be more teacher-student, master-pupil, like in some karate movie. But it wasn't. He was on my side. I knew that. He had been with Abeona a long time and would, I'm sure, help me in a pinch, yet there was always a tension between us.

"You have something that doesn't belong to you," Dylan said.

"What's that?"

"A tape."

"Oh, right. Well, since my father was on it, I kinda think it belongs to me too."

We kept walking.

"My father helped rescue Luther, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"So why is Luther our enemy now?"

"It's a long story," Dylan said.

"I can walk slower if you'd like."

"You're still new to this," Dylan said.

"Not that new."

"Do you know who Abeona was?"

"A Roman goddess who protected children."

"Something like that," Dylan said. "To be more exact, Abeona is the Roman goddess of outward journeys. She guards over children as they leave their home for the first time to explore the world."

"Okay," I said. "And how long has the Abeona Shelter existed?"

He smiled. "No one knows."

"What does that mean?"

"I was called. You were called. Lizzy Sobek was called. There were ones called before her. There will be ones called after us."

"And you don't know when it all started?"

"No."

"Who calls us?"

"For now? It's Lizzy Sobek. One day, we will have a new leader." He smiled at me. "I have been on both ends, Mickey. I'm a rescuer. And I was

rescued.”

I flashed back to the “memorial” service for a little boy named Dylan Shaykes. “Everyone thinks you’re dead.”

He kept walking.

“Even your father.”

“Yes.”

“You’re okay with that?”

“He’s the reason I was rescued. My father . . .” He closed his eyes for a second, as though in pain. “He was a cruel man.”

“Did Bat Lady rescue you?”

“Her name is Lizzy Sobek.”

“I know. But it’s dangerous to use her real name, right?”

He nodded. “Good point. Yes. She rescued me. I was in the hospital. My father had hurt me. Again. I told the police that I fell down the stairs. Again. I don’t think they believed me, but my father could be a very charming man when he wanted to be. I remember sitting in the hospital room and thinking about hurting myself again. So I could stay longer. I didn’t want to go back to that house. I was scared.” He stroked his chin. “Do you know those containers for disposable needles?”

I nodded.

“I tried to break into it. So I could get a needle. I thought maybe I could use it as a weapon or . . .”

“Or what?” I asked.

“Or I could use it to kill myself.”

There may have been sounds around us. There may have been cars driving by or children playing somewhere nearby or something like that. But I heard none of it.

“Bat Lady came in. She was dressed like a nurse. She took me away.”

“Where did she take you?”

A small smile came to his lips. “Where do you think?”

I remembered the tape he wanted. “To that tunnel?”

“Yes. For a long time, that was where we hid the rescued until we could find them safe transport. There is a door down there. It can be hidden by a false wall.”

“I saw it,” I said.

“When you found that tape?”

I remembered it now. I had walked past it. "Yes."

"Anyway, that's where I stayed for the first two weeks. There was so much attention that they couldn't move me. The room has all this canned food and a toilet and a shower. It's soundproof so if, say, a scared child started crying, the police or a nosy visitor wouldn't hear. Two other boys were down there with me too. One was already there when I arrived. One came a few days later. Eventually we were moved."

"Moved where?"

"Someplace safe. We never find out where they go. That's part of how Abeona works. We compartmentalize. So I don't know what happened to those boys."

"And you?"

"In my case, I was sent to England. I grew up in the town of Bristol."

That explained the accent. This all made sense. No one knew about that tunnel. You could approach it hidden, from the woods and into the garage. "I blew it, I guess."

"Pardon?"

"You can't use that secret room anymore," I said. "Now I understand what Bat Lady meant. The police know about it now. If more kids go missing, it will be the first place they look."

"True," he said. "But the house is gone anyway. We had been using the tunnel. But that secret room . . ." A shadow crossed his face. "We stopped using that room a long time ago."

"I don't understand."

"We sealed it shut. It hasn't been open in years."

"Why?"

Dylan didn't answer right away.

"Why did you stop using that room?"

"That's what I need you to understand, Mickey."

"What?"

"You watched the tape with Luther and your father?"

It felt as though a cold hand had caressed the back of my neck. "Yes."

"Those boys were the last ones to ever use that secret room."

CHAPTER 33

Dylan started walking faster.

“Wait,” I called to him. “What happened?”

“We rescued a little girl once. I won’t tell you the horrors she had to endure. Her mother had done things to her that would boggle the imagination. But the little girl still thought that woman was her mother. She didn’t know any better. She thought that she loved this evil woman. That’s what happens. You get attached to your abuser, especially when you’re a young child who doesn’t know any better.”

Spoon had said something like this. Something about Stockholm syndrome. I remembered how defiant Luther had been on the tape.

“And that was the case with Luther?”

“Yes.”

“So what happened?”

“Your father made a mistake that night.”

“What kind of mistake?”

“Someone had seen him.”

Again I thought about what we had seen when we watched the video in Spoon’s room. There had been a sudden interruption. “They followed him back to the house,” I said.

“Yes.”

“That’s when you all started panicking. I saw it on the tape.”

Dylan nodded.

“So who was it?”

“The state police.”

“Did they search the house?”

“Yes.”

“But they didn’t find the boys.”

“No. They were in the secret room. We had the false wall covering the door. Luther was calling for help.”

“But the police couldn’t hear him.”

Dylan looked pained again. “Exactly.”

“So what happened?” I asked.

“You noticed the smaller boy on the tape. The one Luther had his arm around?”

“Yes.”

“His name was Ricky.”

Was. He said “was.”

“He wasn’t Luther’s biological or even adopted brother. But in most ways, Ricky meant more to Luther than that. Those two had gone through hell and back together. Luther had always protected him.”

“What happened to him?”

Dylan took a breath and let it go. “He died.”

I felt my throat clench. “How?”

“You have to understand. The police were watching us. They even brought Lizzy Sobek to the police station to ask her questions. We have a powerful lawyer on the Abeona team. She came and helped us get through it. But that was the thing about that room. We didn’t have wires. We didn’t have a sound system. We wanted to make sure that there was no way anyone could get in or out of that room. Like I said, it was soundproof. All of those precautions had saved many children over the years. But it also meant that if something went wrong, it might be a while before we knew about it.”

“So what happened?”

“Ricky was a sickly child. He often suffered seizures. When your father rescued them, it had been chaos. He had to rush. Luther told him that they needed to go back and get the boy’s medicine. But your father didn’t have a chance. That wasn’t his fault, of course. Normally we would have taken care of it right away. We would have gotten our hands on the medications. That was part of our protocol. We always ask about that when they arrive.”

“But not that night,” I said.

“No. That night, when the police came, we didn’t have time. Ricky had a seizure. A really bad one.”

“And he died?” I asked.

“Yes.” Dylan Shaykes looked into my eyes. “Can you imagine it? Watching the only person you ever loved die on the floor in front of you. Pounding on the big metal door. Screaming for help.”

“And no one could hear,” I said.

Dylan nodded. “We sealed up the room after that. No one has been in it since.”

We walked some more.

“Luther never forgave, did he?”

“He pretended he did. But that was just to get placed. As soon as he was out, he ran away. I don’t know where he’s been. He blamed all of us, but your father most of all. He swore that he would get revenge.”

“What did he do to my father?”

“I don’t know.”

“I saw him there. Eight months ago. He was dressed as a paramedic. He took my father away.”

He nodded. “I know.”

“Bat Lady thinks my father’s alive.”

“I know.”

“Do you?”

Dylan looked at me and I saw the answer before he said it. “No.”

I swallowed. “You think . . . ?”

“That Luther killed your father. Yes. I saw him, Mickey. I saw his rage. So, no, I don’t think he spared him. I think he took him away and killed him.”

“Is that why he burned down the house? For revenge?”

“I assume so.”

“And he’s still out there.”

“Yes.”

“So you’re still not safe.”

“None of us are, Mickey. None of us are safe.”

CHAPTER 34

I came home exhausted.

I figured that I would text Ema and start filling her in on my encounter with Dylan Shaykes, but as soon as my head hit the pillow, I started drifting off. It could wait, I thought. In fact, it would probably be better to go over this with her face-to-face.

I fell into a deep sleep.

When I walked to school Monday, I took a slightly different route to avoid the Bat Lady's house. I was not sure why I did that. Or maybe I knew but I didn't want to think about it.

In the past I had thought about all the children who were rescued in that house. Now, for the first time, I started thinking about one specific boy who ended up dying trapped in a room. I hated Luther. I hated what he did to me and my family. One day, I hoped to meet up with him and exact justice.

But part of me now understood. Part of me wondered what it must have been like to be locked in a room, watching the only person you love die—and there is nothing you can do about it.

Bat Lady had explained it to me right at the beginning. The good guys don't always win. We rescue as many as we can. There is an old Arab expression that when one person dies, an entire universe dies. The opposite is true too. If you save a life, even one, you save a universe.

But you can't save them all.

I was about three blocks from the school when I heard the car. It was a red sports car. Troy was driving. He pulled up alongside me and said, "Want

a ride?”

“Sure.”

I slid low into the passenger seat. The car sat way down. It felt like my butt was practically on the road. Troy shifted into gear and we shot away. “I thought a lot about what we talked about,” Troy said. “About Buck.”

“Uh-huh,” I said. “And?”

“I’m trying to think how to say this.” He put his hand through his thick mane of hair, keeping his eyes focused on the road. “Part of the reason I gave you a hard time when you first showed up has to do with your uncle. Myron and my old man don’t get along.”

“So I gathered. Do you know why?”

Troy shook his head. “It dates back to high school. My dad was the senior captain on the basketball team when Myron was a sophomore.”

Neither one of us had to say *just like us* because we were both thinking it.

“So what happened?”

“I don’t know. Do you?”

“No idea,” I said.

“Yet they still hate each other all these years later,” Troy said.

“Yeah.”

“Mickey?”

“What?”

“I don’t want that to be our fate,” Troy said.

I wanted to say something like *me neither* or *it won’t be*, but it all sounded so stupid in my head. I let it pass. I watched Troy driving. He had been looking troubled a lot lately but not like this.

“What aren’t you telling me?” I asked.

His jaw clenched as though he was willing himself not to say anything.

“Troy, if you want me to help you . . .”

He turned the wheel sharply to the left and then slowed to a stop. We were still a block away from school. “Buck has been my best friend since we were six—since we had Mr. Ronkowitz in first grade.” He stopped the car and turned to me. “Do you have any friends like that, Mickey?”

I felt a deep pang in my chest. “No,” I said. “No one.”

“You and Ema. You’re tight, right?”

“Right.”

“Imagine if you’d been that way since you were six. I mean, I’m not saying friends have to know each other a long time. But since we were six. You get what I’m saying?”

“I think so,” I said.

Troy closed his eyes and let out a deep breath. “Buck was taking steroids.”

For a moment we just sat there, two guys in a car parked on a side street, not saying a word. We let the revelation hang between us. Finally I asked, “When did he start?”

“I don’t know. Last spring.”

“He just admitted it?”

“Not at first. I asked him about it, though. I could see he was getting bigger. He said I should do them too. I said I didn’t need to. Then after you showed up, he started pushing me a little harder. He started saying that I’d always been the leading scorer, but if I didn’t get a lot better, you’d take over. Stuff like that. He started getting angrier too. Roid rage, I think they call it, right?”

Roid rage, I knew, was one of the many side effects of steroids. You start losing your temper easily. You grow dark and violent and even suicidal.

Troy shook his head again. “I should have stopped him. I mean, I saw the changes but I didn’t do anything, you know? And then . . . then I saw the changes in how Buck was with me.”

“What do you mean?”

“My dad once told me that relationships are never fifty-fifty. He said the key was to understand that. Sometimes it’s ninety-ten, sometimes ten-ninety. But if you’re thinking it’s always fifty-fifty, you’re going to get yourself in trouble.”

“Okay.”

“With Buck and me, look, I was the leader, he was the follower. That’s just the way it was. I didn’t think anything of it. But the last few weeks, it was, like, suddenly that bugged him.”

“That you were the leader?”

“Right. I think it was the steroids. Buck started directing his anger toward me too.”

I thought about that for a few moments. “Buck wanted you to take steroids too.”

“Yes.”

“Was he upset when you didn’t?”

“Yeah. I mean, he said something like, you think you’re too good for them or something. I don’t remember his exact words.”

“So how was Buck getting the steroids?” I asked.

Troy closed his eyes and said, “Oh man.”

“What?”

“I don’t want to say.”

“Troy, I’m trying to help here.”

“It stays between us, right?”

“Where did he get them?”

Troy’s eyes opened. He turned toward me and looked me straight in the eye. “His brother.”

I think I gasped out loud. “Randy?”

Troy nodded. “He deals out of his father’s gym. A lot of people know that.”

“But Randy has a huge career ahead of him. Why would he risk that?”

“Are you serious?”

“Yes.”

“How do you think he got that huge career? Do you know how many athletes do it—pro, college, and yeah, even high school? It’s practically an epidemic. Some get caught, but most of the time they know how to cycle or take some kind of masking agent. Everyone is looking for an edge, Mickey. The other guy is doing it, so they do it. The other guy is going to get that college scholarship, so you do it so you can even the score. After a while, they don’t even see it as cheating. They see it as leveling the playing field.”

I swallowed. “Is that how you felt, Troy?”

“What?” He put his hand against his chest. “No. Look, I’m telling you the reality. Truth is, I don’t need it. I’m a point guard. My game is more finesse. But I get it. Don’t you?”

“No,” I said. “I wouldn’t cheat.”

“Really? I’ve seen how much you love basketball. Suppose everyone else was taking a pill that made them bigger and stronger and you got left behind. You got cut from the team. You weren’t any good. And the only reason is, they were taking this pill and you weren’t. Are you saying you

would *never*, ever take it? That you'd just settle for getting cut and watching others take your spot?"

I shifted in the seat. "That's not the reality."

"But that's how some guys start to see it," Troy said. "You're a special talent. You don't have to worry about that. Or maybe, look, maybe I'm trying to justify what a friend did. I don't know."

I tried to let all of this sink in. According to Troy, Randy Schultz dealt steroids. Was that true? How could I check on that?

Uncle Myron might know.

I thought now to the tense scene I'd witnessed a week ago at Schultz's gym. What was going on between Uncle Myron and Randy? What help did he and his dad want from him that, as a lawyer, Myron couldn't share with me?

"There's something else," Troy said.

I waited.

"I didn't think much of it before all this happened and even after, I mean, whatever I was saying, Buck is still my best friend. I wouldn't believe . . ."

"Wouldn't believe what?"

"Do you know the shed behind the town circle?"

Kasselton had a town circle. On one side of it was the high school. On the other was a bunch of municipal buildings and the YMCA. "No, not really."

"It's behind town hall, near the Y."

"Okay."

"Anyway, a few days before they ran the tests, I was supposed to meet Buck at the circle. We were going to take a couple of laps."

The circle was exactly half a mile in circumference. It was a popular jogging spot.

"I got there early," Troy said, "and I spotted something weird."

"What?"

"I saw Randy and Buck going into that shed."

I was getting confused. "The one behind town hall?"

"Right."

"What kind of shed is this?"

"Well, that's just it. I looked it up. The property is owned by Schultz's gym."

“So it’s theirs?”

“I guess. So I followed them to it. When they saw me, they freaked out.”

“Freaked out how?”

“They pulled down the shades and came out and acted like it was nothing. But I saw something.”

“What?”

Troy took his time. Then at last he said, “Test tubes.”

I tried to make that compute. It wouldn’t. “Did you ask Buck about them?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“I figured . . . well, I figured that they had something to do with the steroids. You know. Like it was his supply hut or something.”

“You don’t think that anymore?”

“I don’t know. But that was the last time Buck and I talked. Nothing was ever the same. Now he’s gone, and I got thrown off the team. So now I’m thinking about what you said. I’m thinking about that shed. And I’m thinking there’s some secret in there that could give us all our answers.”

CHAPTER 35

Troy and I agreed to meet up that night at the town circle and check out the shed under the cover of darkness. I'd hoped to talk to Ema during lunch because I really needed her take on Luther and my father, not to mention what Troy had told me about Buck and his brother, but Ema had to meet with Mrs. Cannon, her math teacher, during lunch for extra help. She had a big test coming up.

Schoolwork waits for no teenager. Schoolwork doesn't care about your problems.

Around 2:00 P.M., I got a text from Spoon: **Found something huge. When can you get here?**

Ema and Rachel had been copied too. I texted back that I would go right after practice. Ema wrote that she had some homework and would meet me there. Rachel said that she had play tryouts—she was going for the role of Éponine in the school's production of *Les Miz*—so she wouldn't be able to make it, but hoped someone could fill her in later.

Our team.

I thought about the four of us and wanted to shake my head. What chance did we have against guys like Luther? On the one hand, none. On the other hand, we had done pretty darn well so far.

As soon as practice was over, I showered, changed, and hurried to the hospital. The lady behind the desk had gotten to know me by now. She handed me a pass with a minimum of fanfare. I took the elevator up to his floor.

When I walked past the hospital lounge for visiting family members, I spotted Mrs. Spindel, Spoon's mother, sitting in the corner. She stared out the window. Her eyes looked like shattered marbles. I stopped and swallowed. We had not spoken since my first visit after Spoon had been shot. She told me in no uncertain terms that she blamed me:

Oh, I know it's your fault . . .

As though sensing my presence, Mrs. Spindel turned toward where I was standing. For a moment she just looked at me. I wasn't sure what to do. Waving hello seemed foolish. I prepared for another dose of her deserved wrath. But she surprised me this time.

"Thank you, Mickey."

"For what?" I asked.

"For being here. For being his friend."

I shook my head. Her earlier anger had stung, but somehow this hurt more. I was Spoon's friend? If so, some friend. "How is he?" I asked.

"No change."

I wanted to say something encouraging, but that felt like the exact wrong thing to do. I nodded and waited.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I was being too hard on you. I hope you understand . . ."

"You were right," I said.

"No, Mickey, I wasn't. It wasn't your fault. I can see how much you care about him—and how much he cares about you. That's rare and special. It's just that since you've come to town . . ."

Her words faded away. She didn't have to finish the thought. I got it. I had wanted to move back to the United States. I wanted to make roots in a town like Kasselton. I wanted to be in a real high school and play on a real team, and while I loved my life of travel with my parents, I had craved some normalcy.

So my loving parents had abided my wishes.

Now my father was dead. My mother was a drug addict. And my new friend was lying in a hospital bed, unable to move his legs.

I thought about what Bat Lady said, about how Spoon was meant for great things. I wanted to tell this woman about that, but I knew how stupid it would sound. I didn't get Bat Lady or Elizabeth Sobek or whatever she was called. I always expected my old mentor to be kinder or sweeter or

someone I could relate to. Bat Lady was none of those things. I always felt more puzzled after I left her than before. Sometimes I thought that she had special powers, but then something would happen that would bring me crashing back to reality.

There was no destiny here. No already-determined winner. We could indeed win. And we could indeed die.

Still, Bat Lady had told me Spoon was destined for greatness. She had told me that my father was still alive.

Did she know something?

Did she have some special powers? Or was she just a crazy do-gooder who saved some and lost others?

Mrs. Spindel turned back toward the window, dismissing me, I guess, or giving me permission to visit her son now. I stood there another second and felt a hand on my back. I turned. It was Ema.

“Hey,” she said softly.

“Hey.”

We started down the corridor and opened the door to Spoon’s room. Two doctors walked out with grim expressions. It was another dose of reality.

Spoon looked distracted.

“You okay?” I asked him.

Spoon didn’t answer right away.

“Your text said you found something huge?” I said.

“You first,” Spoon said.

“What?”

“Tell us about Luther.”

So I did. I told them about Dylan Shaykes, about how he’d been rescued as a child, about how my father had rescued Luther, about the death of the little boy Ricky, about how Luther blamed my father. Ema listened in shock. Spoon stayed distracted.

When I finished, before Ema could say a word, Spoon said, “Now tell us about Jared Lowell.”

That question puzzled me. “What do you mean?”

“Tell us about your visit to Adiona Island.”

“I did already.”

Spoon looked up at me. “Tell us again. Everything. Everything that happened from the moment you arrived on that island to the moment you

left.”

“Why?”

But Spoon just looked at me. He didn’t have to say more. So I went through it again—the ferry ride, the walk down the street, the narrow road where Jared lived. I recounted as best as I could the entire conversation Rachel and I had had with Jared Lowell. Spoon interrupted several times, asking for more details, most of which seemed completely irrelevant.

After I was finished, Ema followed up with the first question, but it wasn’t for me. It was for Spoon. “What was that all about?”

“You really care about this guy, don’t you?” Spoon asked her.

I had never seen him so serious.

“Yes.”

“So do you buy it?”

“Buy what?”

“That Jared Lowell was just flirting with you online and decided not to do it anymore for no reason and, oh, decided to go back to Adiona Island?”

Ema looked at me, then back to Spoon. “No, I don’t buy it.”

“Because his feelings for you were real.”

“Well, I could have been fooled—”

“You could be fooled a million different ways, Ema,” Spoon said, a hint of impatience in his voice, “but not in this case. Not with the feelings. You could be fooled by the outer trappings. But not by your heart.”

We both looked at Spoon, dumbfounded. Who was this guy? As if to show us he was still the same, Spoon arched an eyebrow and said, “I’ve been reading romance books on the side.”

“I still don’t see what you’re getting at,” I said.

“Adiona Island,” Spoon said.

“What about it?”

“The name.”

I tried not to look as confused as I felt. “What about it?”

“You know who Abeona was, right?”

“What?”

“Abeona, the Roman goddess of outward journeys.”

“What does that have to do with—”

“Adiona is her sister,” Spoon said.

I froze.

“Adiona is the Roman goddess of safe return. They both protect children. That’s their roles. They are partners. They watch over children—Abeona on their departures, Adiona on their return.”

Ema and I stood there, not saying a word.

“Either of you think the name is a coincidence?” Spoon asked.

We didn’t answer.

“Neither do I,” Spoon said. “You need to go back to that island. You need to go back as soon as you can.”

CHAPTER 36

Ema and I started home.

“I’m going this time,” Ema said. “I want Jared to look me in the eye and say it was no big thing.”

I nodded. “Okay.”

“We leave in the morning?”

I nodded again.

“What else?” she asked.

“What do you mean?”

Ema just frowned. “Aren’t we past that, Mickey?”

She had a point. “We are,” I said.

“So?”

“It’s about Troy.”

Ema sighed. “Are you still trying to prove he didn’t do steroids?”

“Yes.”

“And?”

“I think he was set up.”

“By?”

“By Buck.”

Ema shook her head.

“What?” I said.

“Buck doesn’t put ketchup on his French fries without asking Troy first.”

“Buck’s brother might have been involved.”

“How?”

I filled her in on what I’d learned so far. We kept walking. We reached the road where Ema would—before I knew the truth about where she lived and who her mother was—peel off and walk on her own.

“So that’s what you’re doing now?” Ema asked, when I finished. “You and Troy are going to break into this shed.”

“I could use help,” I said.

“Me?”

“Sure.”

Ema shook her head. “No.”

“Why not? This is what we do, Ema. We help people.”

“I don’t want to help Troy Taylor.”

“But this could lead to the truth.”

“I don’t care, Mickey. You don’t get it. He’s been cruel to me my whole life.”

“Okay, then,” I said.

“Okay what?”

“I won’t help him either.”

“Oh no,” Ema said. “You don’t get to put that on me.”

I stopped. We turned and looked at each other. I was far taller, so she tilted her head up. I knew that it was maybe wrong to think this, but she looked so vulnerable, gazing up at me. Young and innocent, and the idea that those eyes would see something that would hurt her made my heart ache.

Darkness had set in. Her face glowed in the moonlight.

I wanted to protect her. I wanted to protect her always.

“People change, Ema.”

She blinked and looked away. “I don’t think so, Mickey.” Ema took a step back and started toward the woods to the right. “I’m going home,” she said. “Don’t follow me.”

“You’re really not going to help me?”

“I’m really not going to help you,” she said. “But, Mickey?”

“Yes?”

“If it all goes wrong, I’ll still be there for you.”

“It won’t all go wrong,” I said.

But she had already turned away and started down the path.

CHAPTER 37

The town circle was bustling with late-night joggers of all ages, genders, and persuasions. The track was well lit and had no car traffic. It was safe, comfortable, and for those who liked to be seen working out, it offered something of an audience. I stood by a statue of Robert Frost in front of the library on the southern tip of the circle. The municipal buildings and YMCA, not to mention, I guess, the Schultz family shed, were on the other side of Kasselton Avenue.

My phone rang. It was Troy.

“Where are you?” I asked him.

“Look toward the Y.”

I did. It was too dark to see much.

“The right side,” he said. “Toward the back. I’m holding up my phone.”

Now I saw the glow of a phone, a pinprick of light in the dark.

“I see you,” I said. “I’m on my way.”

I hung up the phone and followed the light. Kasselton Avenue is the town’s busiest road. I waited for the light and crossed at the walk. No reason to jaywalk and break any extra laws tonight, thank you very much. I veered toward the YMCA and met up with Troy near the back of the building.

“Thanks for coming,” Troy said.

“No problem. Where is this shed?”

“It’s down that path. Come on, I’ll show you.”

We walked on a concrete pathway into the darkness. I glanced behind me. The circle was lit up almost like a distant dome. It provided a modicum of illumination, enough to see the faint outline of a small building maybe thirty yards in front of me.

All the lights were out in the shed.

“Mickey?” Troy whispered.

“Yeah?” I whispered back.

“Buck wouldn’t set me up. I don’t care what he was taking or doing. He wouldn’t do that to me.”

“What about Randy?” I asked.

“Maybe,” Troy allowed. “But why would he do it?”

“Why would Buck? Why would anyone?”

That question kept coming back to me. Why would anyone want to set Troy Taylor up for a positive drug test? Who gained from it? Who hated him enough . . . ?

Uh-uh, I told myself. No way.

I said that to myself because when I thought about who hated Troy, the first name that popped into my head was Ema.

I pushed the thought away. This sadly was sometimes how my mind worked. It went places that it shouldn’t go.

“I don’t know,” Troy said.

“So let’s see how this plays out.”

“Okay,” Troy said. “What do we do now?”

I took the lead. We crept down closer to the building. I wasn’t sure exactly how to describe the size. When I think of a shed, I think of a place to store tools in the backyard. This was bigger than that, closer to the size of a one-car garage. It was oddly situated too, behind town hall, not far from the police station, the library, and the high school. One would think that this was public land, owned by the town, but for some reason, Buck’s father had decided to purchase it.

Why?

I moved toward the shed and tried to look through the darkened windows. I cupped my hand against the glass and leaned in close. Part of me almost expected to see a face jump into view, like a big clown’s face with a big smile, and then I’d startle back, screaming.

Stop it, I scolded myself.

There was nothing to see. It was too dark.

Troy was trying to peer into the window too. "Make out anything?" he whispered to me.

"No."

We circled the building. I could see why you might call it a shed. It was flimsier than a real building, made out of some kind of prefab material you'd find in the lot of a hardware store. There were two more windows in the back, but the shades were drawn.

"So now what?"

I spotted a back door. Good. From this angle, no one near the circle could see anything. Come to think of it, even in the front, which more or less faced the circle, no one could really see anything.

"We check the door," I said.

Sometimes you get lucky. Sometimes you put a hand on a doorknob and turn it and the door is unlocked. That wasn't what happened here. Locked. I checked the area around the knob. The lock looked pretty cheap.

Not long ago, Ema and I had tried to break into Bat Lady's house. I had taken a credit card from my wallet and tried to open it via the way I had seen a thousand times on television. It hadn't worked. That lock had been old and so it simply gave way. But after that I got curious, so I started searching the Internet to learn how to pick locks. In truth, it isn't easy. If there was a deadbolt, it was impossible, but if this was a standard spring bolt, I could maybe get away with it.

It was a spring bolt.

Bingo.

I took out my credit card and started to work it. You don't really pick a lock with a credit card. You jimmy it open. I stuck the card in the crack between the door and the frame and slid it down to the lock. I bent the card toward the knob, hoping to slide the corner underneath. Nothing much happened. I put my shoulder against the door. The key is, open it fast when you feel the pop. That's what the websites said.

It wasn't working.

I pushed a little harder with my shoulder. The cheap material gave way. I could feel something bend. I looked back at Troy. He shrugged and said, "I can do it if you want."

I shook my head. I was already there. My fingers might not be nimble, but there was nothing like a strong shoulder. I rocked back, hit the door a little harder with my shoulder, and the door flew open.

Breaking and entering. Again.

I was already cooking up various excuses, just in case we got caught. Example: We had heard someone calling for help maybe. Or we just tried the door and it was already open, so we just came to check and make sure everything was okay.

Right. Like either one of those would fly.

But at least I had a Get-Out-of-Jail-Free card with me: the police chief's son. I slowly stepped into the shed. Troy followed me inside. There was a wall right in front of us dividing the space into two rooms. The lights were out, so we couldn't see much more.

"You take the room on the left," I said to him. "I'll take the room on the right."

"Should we use our flashlights?"

"Let's keep the beams low, beneath the window height."

"Okay," Troy said. "Mickey?"

"What?"

"What are we looking for?"

"A big sign with the word *clue* on it."

Troy laughed at that. "I'm serious."

"A laptop, for one thing. Files maybe. But in truth, I'm not sure. I think it's one of those 'we'll know it when we see it' kinda things."

"Got ya."

We split up then. I did as I suggested and kept my smartphone's flashlight beam pointed at the floor. I could make out what looked like a table in the center of the room. I moved toward it. I risked lifting the beam a little higher to see what was on the table.

It looked like chemistry class.

Test tubes, beakers, flasks, and the like littered the table. I started to wonder if there was a Bunsen burner here too. I turned off the flashlight and tried to think for a moment.

A lab.

Why?

I thought about what Troy had told me—about Randy dealing drugs. Could this be, I don't know, a drug lab of some kind? How do you make steroids? I had no idea. Could that be what this was?

Again: no idea.

The room was sparkling clean. I saw a metal cylinder on the right. Stainless steel cabinets lined the wall. I put my hand on one. It felt cold to the touch. I took hold of the handle and pulled the cabinet open. It opened like a refrigerator. I felt cold air. I lifted the flashlight so that I could see inside.

There might as well have been a sign saying CLUE.

"Ew, gross," I whispered to myself.

Troy stuck his head around the wall. He shined the flashlight up in my face before aiming it toward the open cabinet. "Wait, is that . . . ?"

"I think so, yeah," I said.

The cabinet was loaded up with small plastic containers that I recognized from our drug testing. There was a yellow liquid inside. In short, the cabinet was loaded up with . . .

"Urine samples," I said.

"Nasty."

I made a face and gently lifted one of the specimen cups.

Suddenly I heard Troy's panicked voice. "What was that?"

I turned toward him. "What?"

He leapt toward the window, nearly knocking the urine specimen from my hand. I followed him. We ducked down low and peeked outside. At first, I didn't see anything, just the streetlights in the distance.

"What?" I asked.

"Might have been my imagination, but I-I thought I saw . . ."

And then they became clearer. Flashlights. Flashlights that were heading toward us. Not small flashlights like on our smartphones, but big, thick ones, the kind used by . . .

"It's my dad!" Troy yell-whispered. "We gotta get out of here!"

He didn't have to tell me twice. We ran for the door, bumping into the table. Beakers crashed to the floor. I heard a voice yell out. An adult voice.

Like the voice of a cop.

Troy got to the door first, but I was right behind him. We ran straight back, trying to keep the building between those flashlights and our bodies.

Troy jumped behind a big boulder. I joined him. Up the hill on Kasselton Avenue, I could now see the whirling light atop a parked police car.

“Oh man,” I said.

“Split up,” Troy said. “You head into the woods, I’ll go behind the Y and try to circle to the street. If I can get there, I can divert them.”

That made sense. I turned and ran into the woods behind me. This sounded easier than it actually was. It was dark now. There was only the faintest light coming from the distant streetlights. Woods have a lot of, well, trees. So put it altogether: running in a dark place with a lot of trees.

Not easy.

The third time I kissed bark, it dawned on me that I’d have to slow down. What choice did I have? If I kept running face-first into trees, I would probably knock myself unconscious. I started moving like Frankenstein, keeping my hands out in front of me, feeling my way.

“Stop! Police!”

The voice made me duck behind a tree. I risked a look. Two of the cops—or least, two flashlights—were entering the woods now. Because they had flashlights, they didn’t really need to worry too much about smashing into trees. They could move at a pretty fast clip.

Oh man, I was in trouble.

Those dumb excuses—I heard someone call for help, the door lock was broken before we got there—started flooding back in, but I knew that they would just help sink me. Bat Lady would not be able to get me out of this one, and I somehow doubted that Buck’s father would say that I had permission to break the lock on his shed door and shatter a bunch of beakers.

Yep, I was in trouble.

I stayed behind the tree but I could tell from the bouncing flashlights that they were getting closer.

Think, Mickey.

The fact was, the two officers had one advantage over me: They could see. I had one advantage over them, albeit temporarily: I could hide. But the hiding could only last a little longer. The flashlights would discover me. But then again, if I put my flashlight on too, yes, they’d see me, but it would also even the playing field.

There was one other thing to consider—the police officers might be armed—but this was Kasselton, not Newark. In towns like this, officers don't pull their guns, especially on suspects running through the woods.

I flipped on the flashlight and ran.

“Stop! Police!”

I didn't know which was worse: breaking into that shed or running away from the police. Either way, I picked up my pace. They were fast. I was faster. More than that, I did figure out an advantage. I would shine my flashlight in front of me, plan out the path, turn off the flashlight, confuse them with that, turn it on again when I needed it.

Then I got a break.

The woods started to grow less dense. The officers behind me were in the thick of it now. I was nearly out. Once I barreled through, I came into a clearing behind the Kasselton Mall.

Perfect.

There were still plenty of cars in the lot. That was a bonus too. I hurried over to Target because it was the largest store in the mall. I found a corner kiosk in the appliance department where I could see both entrances. If the police entered one, I could hurry out the other or even hide in the vast space of the store.

But the cops didn't come inside.

At the end of the day, I was just a kid who maybe broke into a big tool shed. It might be interesting, but it wasn't as though a SWAT team was going to be called out.

Half an hour after entering the Target, I went through the mall and exited out the Sears on the other side. There were no police. I started down Hobart Gap Road toward Uncle Myron's house.

So what do I do now?

Should I text Troy? That seemed iffy. If he'd been caught and I texted him, the police might see that we were communicating. I should wait and let him contact me. But then again, would he? Wouldn't he logically think the same thing about contacting me and also wait?

I wasn't sure it mattered.

I tried to put together what I had learned in Mr. Schultz's shed. Start from the beginning: One, Troy had seen Buck and his brother, Randy, both of whom he claimed used steroids, go into that shed with test tubes. Now

that I'd been inside the shed, it was clearly some kind of laboratory. It could have something to do with making the PEDs—performance-enhancing drugs. Maybe Randy or Buck was tinkering with, I don't know, their formula.

I frowned. I'm not sure Buck could spell the word *chemistry*, nonetheless start fiddling with complex compounds.

Then I remembered the urine samples.

I don't know how many were stored in that cabinet—and, ew, I hoped none fell on the floor as we ran out—but what could Buck and Randy be doing with them?

Hmm.

I had read somewhere that steroid cheaters would often use someone else's urine to beat the system. Here was how it worked: You hid a urine sample on you when you went to the test. When you entered the bathroom stall to urinate, you switched your sample with one you knew was clean.

Could that be it?

Possible, except for one thing. There were probably a hundred urine samples in storage. We only get tested once or maybe twice a year. Why so many?

I was missing something.

I didn't know what. In a sense, it didn't matter. Tomorrow I would head back to Adiona Island. There was some kind of clue there, some kind of link between that island and the Bat Lady and the Abeona Shelter and maybe even Luther and my father. I wanted to help here. I wanted to figure out why Troy had been set up and by whom. But it wasn't my priority.

Except . . .

I had an idea. I took out my phone and called Brandon Foley. He answered on the third ring. "What's up?" he said.

"I'm about two blocks from your house. You free?"

"Sure," Brandon said. "Anything to avoid studying for this physics test?"

As I got closer, I heard the comforting sound of a dribbling basketball. Brandon was in his driveway again, working on his game. He tossed me the ball when he saw me coming. I stopped and took a jumper. *Swish*. He threw the ball back to me—"courtesy" is a universal basketball concept—but I just held the ball.

"You have your phone?" I asked.

“It’s in the house. Why?”

“I may need you to text Troy.”

“Why can’t you?”

“Because he and I . . .”

“What?”

And that was when I stopped. I liked Brandon. I really did. But I wasn’t sure that I wanted to confess to him that I had just done something illegal. He was president of the student council and all those other things. He took his responsibilities as basketball captain seriously.

Could he be trusted?

Sure, Brandon had been the one to get me involved in helping Troy, but what would he say if I told him that I’d just broken into a storage shed and run away from the cops?

Would he tell?

I had thought that I could ask Brandon to contact Troy for me, so that it wouldn’t get traced back to my phone. But now I wondered whether that was a good move.

“You and he what?” Brandon asked again.

“Nothing.”

“So why did you want to see me?”

In a way, Brandon couldn’t help me with this. I would hear from Troy or I wouldn’t. It didn’t change anything. Brandon couldn’t help with the break-in. He couldn’t help answer why I had found urine samples in that shed or really anything that could cast light on this situation.

So even if I did trust him, even if I believed that he only had my and Troy’s best interests at heart, what was the point of telling him?

Answer: nothing. There was no point.

But there was still one key to all this—one person who could answer all my questions about that shed, about illegal steroids, about why Troy had tested positive. It kept circling back to that same question:

Why had Buck left the town of Kasselton?

There was only one person who, it seemed, could really answer that question for me.

Buck himself.

“Where’s Buck?” I asked.

Brandon looked puzzled by the question. "I told you. He lives with his mom."

"Where does she live?"

"I don't remember," Brandon said. "Somewhere in Maine or Massachusetts."

"You have no idea?"

"I remember he used to go there a lot in the summer." And then Brandon added something that changed everything: "He'd go boating or fishing off the island."

I stood there. I was gripping the basketball so hard, I thought it might pop.

"Island?" I said.

"Yeah, his mom lives on an island. It's got a weird name. Like Apollonia or Adonis or something with an *A*."

I swallowed. "Adiona?"

"Yeah, that's it," Brandon said. "Buck's mom lives on Adiona Island."

CHAPTER 38

Ema and I barely talked on the way back up to Adiona Island.

The seas were choppy this morning. We stood at the front of the ferry. The wind ripped at our faces. I watched Ema's pale complexion redden under the onslaught. She didn't care. I didn't care either.

We had stopped trying to piece this together. There comes a time when you need to put all the theories aside. Mrs. Friedman had a poster in her classroom with a saying from Sherlock Holmes. I don't remember the exact quote, so I'm paraphrasing, but it says that it's a mistake to theorize before you have all the facts because then you twist facts to suit theories instead of the other way around.

We simply had no theories anymore.

We needed more facts.

The wind picked up. Everyone else had ducked inside to escape. Ema and I did not. We stared out as the island emerged from the fog.

"Mickey?"

The wind snatched away the word, making it hard to hear her.

"What?" I shouted back.

"I'm scared."

"We'll be fine," I said.

"I love when you're condescending."

"I'm trying to be comforting."

"Same thing, Mickey." Ema looked up at me. "It's cute that you want to be the hero, but I'd rather you were just honest, okay?"

I put my arm around her. It was just to keep her warm. Nothing else. She moved in closer and rested her head against my chest. We stood like that as the ferry moved closer to the port. I could almost feel something change as we docked. There was something in the air on this island.

A tension. An electricity.

We both felt it.

I moved my arm away. I still hadn't heard from Troy, but then again, I hadn't contacted him either. Spoon had tried to find where on the island Buck's mother lived, but he couldn't come up with anything. It didn't matter. The island was small.

We would find the house.

Meanwhile, there was still the other matter. Ema had to go face-to-face with Jared Lowell, this online persona who had, it seemed, captured her heart. We started down the same road I had walked with Rachel. The wind grew less powerful as we moved inland, but it never left.

"Do you remember what Bat Lady said to me?" Ema asked.

"She said a lot of things."

"At the very end. Right before she got in that car and she drove off with that shaved head guy."

I did remember. "She asked if you loved the boy."

"She didn't ask. She said it. Like she knew."

I nodded. "Right."

"Do you remember what she said after that?"

That line I remembered verbatim: "'It will hurt.'"

"Right."

"And then you asked what will. And she said the truth."

We were nearing Jared's road now. If the island had seemed quiet last time, it seemed completely abandoned now. We had not seen anyone or even a passing car since leaving the dock.

"I think," Ema said, "we may be coming close to that truth."

We made the turn onto Jared Lowell's road. It was completely still, silent. I almost expected one of those ghost-town tumbleweeds to blow across the street. Ema turned to me and said, "Which door?"

I pointed up the block a bit. "That one."

"Okay, good."

"Do you want me to wait here?"

Ema thought about it. "No, come with me."

"You sure?"

"Yeah," she said. "If this is going to hurt, I want you to be there for me."

We started up that same cracked-concrete path. I knocked. Ema and I stood there, adjusting our shoulders and then our heads and doing that dumb stuff you do when you're waiting for a door to open.

Eventually we heard footsteps heading toward us. I glanced at Ema. She gave me a hesitant smile. The door opened.

But it wasn't Jared. It was his mother.

She frowned at me. "You were here a few days ago."

"Yes, ma'am," I said.

"What do you want?"

She said it as though it were an accusation.

"We're here to see Jared."

"What do you want with him?"

I didn't know how to answer that. I looked toward Ema. She said, "We're his friends."

"From the Farnsworth School?"

"No, ma'am," I said.

"Then where are you from?"

"Kasselton, New Jersey," Ema replied.

A look of horror crossed the woman's face. She leaned toward us, baring her teeth like a feral dog. Her eyes were wide. "Get out of here!" she screamed. "Get off this island and never come back!"

She slammed the door so hard that we nearly fell off the stoop.

Ema and I stood there, trying unsuccessfully not to look flabbergasted.

After some time had passed, Ema said, "What the heck was that?"

"I have no idea."

"Did you see how she reacted when she heard where we're from?"

I nodded.

"What could that have to do with my online relationship with her son?"

"Same answer," I said.

"You have no idea?"

"Bingo."

"So now what? Do we start searching for Buck?"

I thought about it. "Did you notice that tennis club on the way in?"

“The snooty-looking one?”

“Right. When Rachel and I were here last time, Jared said something about having to get to his job at the club. I mean, there may be more than one club on this island—”

“No, it’s that one,” Ema said. “Look at this street. This is where the workers live. I bet ninety percent of the people who live here work at that tennis club. The bigger problem is, look at us. You’re wearing jeans. I’m wearing, well, not tennis whites.”

“I have an idea,” I said.

We started back down the street toward the main road. We turned right. The tennis club was up ahead. I thought that maybe there would be a guard or a gate, but this was the kind of island where you didn’t need that. Guards at clubs were there to keep out the riffraff. This island had no riffraff. Just members and staff.

We started down the entrance road when a young man in tennis whites with a sweater tied around his neck hurried toward us. “May I help you?”

“No,” I said. “We’re fine.”

We kept walking toward the clubhouse. I thought that maybe Mr. Tied Sweater would let us be. He didn’t. He ran alongside us and said, “Uh, excuse me?”

“Yes?”

“Why are you here?”

I had expected this. I had hoped, though, to get lucky and walk around a little more and maybe spot our boy, but that was not to be. Still, we kept walking and looking as we spoke. “My name is Will. This is my sister, Grace.”

Ema nodded. We kept walking and scanning for Jared.

“Yeah, okay. What can I do for you? This club has a strict dress code. Neither one of you is adhering to it.”

“We are here seeking employment,” I said.

Tied Sweater was getting annoyed that we wouldn’t stop walking. “I don’t think we are hiring at the current time.”

“Oh, that’s too bad,” Ema said.

We were at the door to the clubhouse. I pushed through. “Maybe we could fill out an application. Just to keep it on file. In case someone quits.”

“We require references. Do you have them?”

“Yes, we do.” It was time to take a chance. “Jared Lowell will recommend us.”

“Oh,” Tied Sweater said, suddenly smiling. His whole persona changed. Jared clearly had some clout. “You’re both friends of Jared’s?”

“Close friends,” said Ema.

“Well, that changes things,” he said.

“He’s working today, right?”

“What? No. In fact, I figured that’s why you’re here.”

I said, “Huh?”

“Jared just left for the ferry. He should be taking off in, oh”—he looked at his watch—“fifteen minutes. The applications are in the back. If you’d like to sit in the—”

But Ema and I were already back outside and sprinting toward the ferry. I was surprised at how Ema was able to keep up with me, but then again, determination counts for a lot.

Still, there wasn’t much time. I did a quick calculation and realized that we wouldn’t arrive before Jared boarded the next ferry.

Now what?

Then the answer came to me: I could break more laws.

“This way,” I said.

“What?”

The summer population here was under two thousand people. That meant there wasn’t much crime or need for law enforcement. People didn’t lock up their homes.

Or their bikes.

We found two in a driveway on the right. Ema and I hopped on and started peddling. Three minutes later, we spotted Jared sitting on a bench by the dock. When he saw us coming, Jared Lowell shielded his eyes from the sun with his hand and said, “You again.”

“Yep. And look who I brought.”

I turned and looked at Ema. I couldn’t help it. Part of me thought that this was probably not how Ema wanted to look the first time she saw her “great love” in person—sweaty, out of breath, disheveled—and a really small pathetic part of me took some small pleasure in that.

Ema looked at him. He looked at her. I took a step back.

“Hey,” Ema said to him.

“Hey,” Jared said back.

Ema seemed to be studying him. He started to shift under her gaze.

“I’m sorry,” Jared Lowell said.

Ema did not reply. She tilted her head, looking at him as though he were some kind of odd experiment.

“I should have told you,” he said.

“Told me what?”

“Excuse me?”

“What were you going to tell me, Jared?”

His feet shifted again. The ferry had arrived. The passengers began to disembark. “You know. I mean, I should have told you that I didn’t want to e-mail you anymore.”

I expected her to be hurt or crushed, but it was as though seeing him in person had given her an odd strength. “Why didn’t you?”

“Why didn’t I tell you?”

“Yeah,” Ema said, “start with that.”

“I don’t know.” Jared gave a big shrug. “It was wrong. Your friend here and I talked about it. I was going to get in touch.”

“So you wanted to, what, break up with me?”

He looked so uncomfortable, even I felt bad for him. “Well, yeah.”

“Why?”

“What do you mean, why?”

“What’s your favorite color?”

“What?”

“Just tell me, Jared. What’s your favorite color?”

Jared opened his mouth, but no words came out. Ema looked at me and shook her head.

“What?” I said.

“It’s not him.”

“What do you mean it’s not him?”

“Give me some credit, Mickey. I thought that as soon as I saw him in person, but after talking to him for just these few seconds . . .” Ema turned back to him. “You’re not the guy who talked to me online, are you?”

“What? Sure I am. Jared Lowell. You saw my Facebook page.”

Ema shook her head. “Yes, Jared, it was your Facebook page. And, yes, you clearly knew about it. But it wasn’t you, was it?”

“What are you talking about?” He tried to laugh it off, but it wasn’t happening. “Of course it’s me. Look, we had something. It was great, I guess, but it was just online. It wasn’t real.”

“Quick: What’s your favorite color?”

“Uh, blue.”

“What’s your favorite food?”

“Pizza.”

“What’s your favorite place?”

“The hidden cove on the west side of this island.”

The color drained from Ema’s face. “Oh no . . .”

“What?” I said.

She turned to me. “He got that last one right.”

“So?” I was confused. “Maybe you were wrong. Maybe he was the one —”

“He got the color wrong. He got the food wrong. Don’t you see?”

Jared started to walk past us. “Look, I got a ferry to catch.”

I put my hand against his chest. “You’re not going anywhere.”

Jared Lowell looked down at my hand. “You serious?”

“Don’t move, Jared.”

“Who do you think—?”

“Don’t. Move.”

He heard the tone, raised his hands, and stayed where he was. Ema folded at the waist as though someone had punched her in the stomach. I hurried toward her. “Ema?”

“Don’t you get it?”

“Get what?”

“His favorite place. It was someplace on this island.”

“So?”

“So if it wasn’t him, who else do we know who would know this island?”

Now I was the one who looked horror stricken. “No,” I said.

She nodded.

“It can’t be,” I said.

“But it has to be,” Ema said. “It was Buck. Buck was the one I met online.”

CHAPTER 39

Jared sat between Ema and me. His head was lowered in his hands.

“It started out as a prank,” he said. “I didn’t like the idea. I didn’t want to be part of it at all.”

He kept his head in his hands. Ema kept looking off, lost in thought, trying to put all the pieces together. She had been so sure that the feelings were real, and yet now she knew that it was a ruse by her longtime nemesis. It wasn’t computing for her.

“So you know Buck,” I said.

“Yes.”

“How?”

“He’s my cousin. Our moms are sisters. They both grew up on this island. When Aunt Ina met Uncle Boris, she moved to Kasselton. My family stayed here. Buck and I spent every summer together on this island. After the divorce, Aunt Ina moved back here.”

I couldn’t tell whether Ema was listening or not.

“So what happened?” I asked.

“Buck knew that I almost never used my Facebook. I don’t like social media. So one day he asked me if he could use it to get revenge on someone. I didn’t like it, but he said some girl had made up a nickname for him, started to call him Mr. Pee Pee Pants.”

“Wee Wee Pants,” I corrected.

Ema shot me a look. I just shrugged back at her. The charge wasn’t really true. Buck had been picking on us, and Ema had countered with some

line about Buck being called Mr. Wee Wee Pants. It had been nothing, really.

“Whatever. Buck said the nickname was sticking. Other kids were calling him that now. He said my profile would be perfect to use because Ema already had a crush on a tall basketball player.”

We sat there for a moment saying nothing. All three of us knew who Buck meant. No one bothered spelling out the obvious.

“See, Buck found out your mom was someone famous and so he went to that board and started communicating with you. I don’t know what he really hoped would happen. That you’d say embarrassing things or maybe he’d just make you fall in love with him and then cruelly dump you. I really don’t know what he intended.”

“But you just said it,” Ema said.

“Huh?”

A tear formed in her eye. “He made me fall for him and then he cruelly dumped me.”

Jared closed his eyes and let loose a long breath. “No, Ema, that’s not what happened.” He stood and started pacing. He rubbed his chin. “I don’t know how much more to say.”

“She’s owed the truth,” I said.

A sad smile came to Jared’s face. “If only it was that simple.”

“Just tell us.”

He stopped pacing. “It worked the other way around, I guess.”

“What do you mean?” Ema said.

“Buck fell for you.”

Ema looked at me. I had nothing to add to that.

“He fell and he fell hard. You have to understand. You really didn’t know Buck. I know, I know, but . . . It’s confusing. Buck loved it up here. On this island, he could be himself. He was relaxed and happy and really the kindest, sweetest guy.”

I tried to picture it, but the picture wouldn’t hold. “That’s not the guy we know.”

“That’s my point. Your town. Kasselton, right? Your town with all the popular kids and the sports and the pressure to succeed and get into the right colleges . . . it warped Buck. He couldn’t handle it. He always had to be something he wasn’t just to fit in.”

I thought about that. I thought about the pressure in that town, the type-A pushy parents, the yelling on the sidelines, the grade grubbing—and then add in for Buck the pressure of the successful brother and maybe losing his starting job.

Jared moved closer to Ema. “But with you,” he said, “Buck felt like he found himself. You were so real. You didn’t care what the other kids thought of you. He so envied that. When he was online with you, once he got over his own stupidity, he started to open up. He could be himself, pretending to be, well, me.”

There were tears in Ema’s eyes now. There were tears in Jared’s too.

“So what happened?” I asked.

“Buck was a mess. He felt trapped, like he was being pulled in all these different directions. He was scared.”

“Of what?” Ema asked.

“Of everything. He wanted to tell you the truth, Ema. But he didn’t know how you’d react. He didn’t know if you’d hate him once you knew that he’d been lying to you this whole time or if you’d forgive him for the past. He thought you’d reject him once you knew.”

I flashed back to my recent conversation with Ema about Troy. I had told her that people change. She was the one who didn’t seem to believe it.

“But like I said,” Jared continued, “he felt trapped. It may sound like nothing now, but what would his friends say? Wouldn’t they all dump on him if he told them he’d fallen in love with you? I know that sounds silly, but these guys had been his whole life. He couldn’t just turn his back on that either.”

“So,” Ema said, “he chickened out.”

Jared said nothing.

“That’s it, right?”

“The ferry is about to leave,” Jared said. “I have to go.”

“Where’s Buck?” I asked.

“Does it matter?” Jared turned to Ema. “He doesn’t want to see you. Isn’t that enough? It’s over.”

The ferry whistle blew last call.

I stood up to block his way, but Ema shook her head. She was right. He had said his piece. I let him pass.

“You should both come with me,” Jared said.

“Why?” I asked.

“You need to leave this island.”

Ema shook her head. “No.”

“Please,” Jared said. “There’s nothing left here for you but more heartache.”

“That’s okay.” Ema stood up. “I’ll just have to deal with more heartache.”

CHAPTER 40

Jared made it to the ferry just before it pulled out.

Ema and I stood side by side. “We need to find Buck,” she said.

“Okay. How?”

“The aunt.”

“Jared’s mother?”

“Yes.”

I frowned. “She seemed like a font of information.”

But Ema had already started walking away. “Come on,” she said. “We need to return the bikes before someone notices they’re missing.”

We pedaled back to the driveway where we had “borrowed” the bicycles. There was no movement. We put the bikes back where they’d been and started up the road toward Jared Lowell’s house.

“Buck,” I said.

“I know.”

“What are you thinking?” I asked her.

“What do you mean?”

“About it being Buck. About Buck falling for you.”

She kept her eyes on the road. “On the one hand, I know that online is not real life. But on the other hand, maybe there is something more real about being online.”

“How so?”

“Online, it’s kind of like you’re in a vacuum without outside pressures. Buck didn’t have to worry about being in his brother’s shadow. He didn’t

have to worry if Troy or his friends would mock him because he liked me.”

“So what you’re saying is, maybe you saw the real Buck?”

“Maybe.”

“And?”

“And I fell hard for him.”

I shook my head. “For Buck?”

“Weren’t you the one who told me people change?”

“And weren’t you the one who told me that they didn’t?”

“Good point.”

Ema increased her speed, moving ahead of me and ending the conversation. We were about fifty yards from Jared’s street when Ema ducked behind a tree. She signaled for me to do the same. She was behind the only tree close by, so I joined her.

“What’s going on?” I whispered.

She gestured toward the road. “See that woman with the shopping bag?”

I took a quick peek. There indeed was a woman carrying a brown grocery bag. “What about her?”

“That’s Buck’s mom. I saw her a few times at school concerts and stuff.”

Buck’s mom turned and disappeared down Jared Lowell’s street. When she was out of sight, Ema hurried out from behind the tree. I stayed with her. We slowed when we reached the turn.

“She doesn’t know me,” I said. “I can keep following her.”

But there was no need. Buck’s mother broke to the left, took out her key, and opened the door to what I assumed was her house.

Right next door to Jared’s.

“The sisters live next to each other,” I said.

Ema nodded. “Makes sense.”

“So now what?”

Ema started biting one of her black-polished fingernails. This island was starting to give me the creeps. Maybe in part it was the name, Adiona (duh, you think?), and all this talk about heartache and hurt, but for a second, I wanted us to listen to Jared Lowell and just get off this crazy island now. I didn’t know where Buck was or what he was doing. I didn’t care. I wanted to go home. I wanted to go home not just for me but, even more so, for Ema.

Jared had told us that she'd find heartache on this island. Bat Lady had warned us that the answer would hurt her. I didn't want anyone or anything to hurt Ema anymore. I didn't want anything to hurt Rachel or Spoon either, but the truth was, since I had entered their lives, they had all taken devastating hits. Rachel had been shot and lost her mother. Spoon had been shot and now lay paralyzed in a hospital bed.

If something happened to Ema . . .

"I'm going to knock on the door," Ema said.

"I'll go with you."

"No."

"What?"

She turned and looked up at me. "Not this time, Mickey. Okay? Just trust me on this."

I didn't know what to say, so I just stood there. Ema walked to the door. She raised her fist, hesitated for a moment, and then knocked on the door. Time stood still. After what seemed like an eternity, the door opened. When Buck's mother saw who it was, her hand flew to her mouth as she choked back a cry.

Ema stepped forward. "My name is—"

"You're Ema," Buck's mother finished for her.

Ema looked confused. "Yes. But how did you—"

Buck's mother opened the door. "Please, come inside."

CHAPTER 41

Time didn't stand still. It just passed by really, really slowly.

For the first ten minutes, I sat on the curb in front of the house. I got antsy. I stood and started walking just a little up the street, then a little down the street, hoping to catch a glimpse of something—*anything*—in the windows.

But there was nothing.

Another ten minutes passed. Then another. People walked by me. They eyed me with suspicion. It was clear to them I didn't belong here. This was a very small road on a very small island. Visitors didn't often loiter.

Ten more minutes passed.

What the heck was going on in there?

I stopped looking at the time and started looking at the sky. The sun shone down on my face. I closed my eyes and soaked it in. I stopped thinking about Ema and Buck. I stopped thinking about Troy's drug test. I even stopped thinking about my own Butcher of Lodz, the sandy-haired man named Luther.

I thought about my mom and dad.

You often hear that you only get one life and that life isn't a dress rehearsal. That was true, but it felt more direct to me. Simply put, this was it. What you're doing right now is life. This moment, every moment impacts and builds on the next. I could think about the days when my father was alive and my mother was sober. I could dream about going back in time to that moment and altering it, but that would never happen.

Time only goes forward.

My cell phone rang. I looked down and saw that it was Uncle Myron. I was about to hit ignore but I decided to answer it.

“Hey, Myron. I need to ask you something.”

“Where are you?”

“It’s not important,” I said. “Why did Randy Schultz want your help?”

“I already told you. I can’t talk about it.”

“Did it have something to do with steroids?”

Silence.

“Because I know Buck took steroids. And I know Randy dealt them. Did he get caught? Is that why he needed your help? Is that why you turned him down?”

“Mickey?”

“Yes.”

“Where are you?”

“I’m right, aren’t I?”

“I told you. I can’t talk about it. Attorney-client privilege. Where are you, Mickey?”

The door to Buck’s house finally swung open.

“I’ll talk to you tonight,” I said, and hit end before Myron could say anything more.

Have you ever seen one of those horror movies where someone goes into a house one way and then they come out another, like maybe they’re a zombie now or their hair is gray or they’re possessed? Like they walked through some portal and completely transformed into something else?

That was what I thought about as I looked at Ema.

She was still dressed the same. The black was still black. The tattoos were still the same. The silver jewelry gleamed just as it had gleamed before. But somehow everything about her seemed different. I know how crazy that sounds. Uncle Myron had told me that when my dad was about my age, he went inside Bat Lady’s house and came out a different person. It almost felt like that, as if Ema had gone through the closet to Narnia and come back again. There was a knowing in her eyes, a maturity in her face.

She looked somehow more grown-up.

Or maybe, after all I had seen on this crazy island, I was big-time projecting.

She didn't so much walk toward me as float. She kept her head up high. Her eyes didn't meet mine like they always did. Instead she looked past me and just kept walking.

"Ema?"

"Let's go," she said, and even her voice sounded more mature. "We can still catch the next ferry."

"Wait, what happened in there?"

She didn't reply. She just kept walking.

"Ema?"

"It's over," she said.

"What's over?"

"Come on. I want to be on that ferry."

"What do you mean, 'it's over'?"

She kept moving faster and faster as though she needed to put distance between herself and that house.

"Did you talk to Buck?"

She didn't stop. I put a hand on her arm. She shrugged it off. I jumped in front of her, blocking her path. I tried to make my voice as gentle as I could.

"What happened in there?"

"I can't tell you," she said.

"What do you mean, you can't tell me?"

"I promised."

She pushed past me and headed down the road. I caught up to her.

"You're kidding, right?"

"No."

"This has to be a joke," I said, which was dumb because I knew that she wasn't kidding and that this was the furthest thing from a joke.

"Remember when you couldn't tell me about who shot Rachel and her mother?"

"You're still mad about that? I told you. It wasn't my secret to tell."

She held up a hand. "You have it wrong."

"Oh?"

"I'm not mad about it at all. I understand now. I'm using your example so you'll understand. I can't tell you. I made a promise."

I frowned. "To Buck?"

"It doesn't matter, Mickey. I can't tell you."

I jumped in front of her again. "This isn't the same thing. Buck isn't Rachel. I came all this way with you. I'm a part of it. I want to know."

Ema shook her head. "Sometimes you're better off not knowing."

"Really? You're going to pull that line on me?"

She walked away from me.

My hands formed fists and I shouted, "I didn't come here just for you."

"I know."

"I came to find Buck for myself."

She nodded without slowing her pace. "To help Troy."

"To find the truth."

"You'll find it soon enough," she said.

"What does that mean?"

But Ema didn't speak again. Not on the road. Not on the ferry or the bus. Not even a good-bye when we went our separate ways back in Kasselton.

CHAPTER 42

Spoon said, “Let it go.”

Rachel and I were back in his room. I was filling them in on what had happened on Adiona Island.

“How can I let it go?”

“Ema is, like, totally awesome, right?”

“Right.”

“And you trust her one hundred percent, right?”

“Right.”

“So why stop trusting her now?” Spoon asked. “She said it’s best if you don’t know. So guess what? It’s best that you don’t know.”

I looked at Rachel. She shrugged. I looked back at Spoon. He pushed his glasses up his nose and met my eye. Bat Lady had said that he was meant for great things. I started thinking back to the beginning of this, that first day when he introduced himself to me by asking if I wanted to use his spoon. It had been his idea how to get into that computer in the school office, his idea to get into Ashley’s locker, his idea even how to get into school the night he was shot. It was Spoon who had told us to go to the Farnsworth School and to Adiona Island twice.

I had always thought that I was the leader of this group.

But maybe it was Spoon.

As though reading my mind, Spoon gave a small nod and said, “Give her time.”

“So now what?” Rachel asked.

“Nothing,” Spoon said. “Ema said it’s over. It’s over.”

I shook my head. “I don’t buy it.”

“Neither do I,” Spoon said. “But we can’t force it. You want the egg to hatch on its own. You don’t want to break it open. Do you see?”

Everyone in my life was talking like a fortune cookie all of a sudden.

“You break it open if you’re hungry,” I said.

“Stop playing with my metaphors. You got basketball practice, right? Go.”

He was right.

“And,” Rachel said, “I heard about your good news, so it should be a fun time.”

I turned to her. “What good news?”

“You didn’t hear?”

“No, what?”

“They overturned Troy’s positive drug test. He’s back on the team.”

CHAPTER 43

I didn't know what to make of that. I hurried over to practice and started to dress. Troy wasn't there, but the mood was definitely buoyant. Guys slapped each other five. A few came over to me and slapped me five too. They thanked me. They gave me fist bumps.

I tried to think about what I might have done.

When I got out to the gym, I spotted Troy shooting under his familiar center basket. A bunch of guys surrounded him and threw him passes. Troy was a point guard, the shortest starter on the team, but he had deadly aim from three-point land. He knocked down four shots in a row. The guys all clapped and cheered.

When I started toward him, Troy broke into a smile. "Mickey!"

Troy and I fist-bumped. He passed me the ball. I took a quick shot and said, "You're back?"

I guess that I could have said something more obvious, but that was what came out of my mouth first.

"You know it."

He slapped me five again.

"What happened?" I asked. "I mean, how—?"

Coach Grady blew the whistle. "Three-man weave," he shouted. "Come on. We have our first scrimmage next Tuesday. Let's get moving."

Troy gave me the full-wattage smile again and said, "Let's talk later. You want a ride home?"

"Sure."

“Okay, man, I’ll fill you in then. Let’s get to work.”

It was a great practice. We had a lot of skilled players, but Troy was the floor leader. He had the experience and the know-how. He was a natural-born leader on the court. No question about it: We were a better team with him back. Practice was more fun. Everything fell into place.

Except for one small thing.

Brandon Foley seemed unusually quiet.

“All okay?” I asked Brandon during a water break.

“Sure.”

“Great about Troy.”

“Yeah,” he said as though spitting out glass. “Great.”

I didn’t know what to make of him, so I let it go. Troy was back—and even though I didn’t seem to have anything to do with it, my teammates appreciated what I had done. Some even noted that I had been “wronged” in the past and they admired how I “stepped up” in spite of all that.

“Team first,” Danny Brown said to me.

“Team first,” I agreed.

As practice ended, Coach Grady shouted, “Okay, boys, gather around.”

We all took spots on the bleachers. We sucked down water and toweled ourselves off. Troy sat next to me.

“Tomorrow’s practice will be at four thirty,” Coach Grady said. “We’ll be in the other gym for the first half hour, then we move into this one.” Coach Grady continued his little spiel, hitting on a few more logistical points. We would be getting our uniforms on Monday, he said. We had the scrimmage in West Orange on Tuesday.

Then he paused and got to the heart of the matter.

“Drug tests for all Kasselton High School winter sports have been declared null and void. It doesn’t matter why. All you guys need to know is that we will be running new tests starting in two weeks. Okay, that’s it. Young guys, let’s get this place straightened up. The rest of you, do your homework and get some sleep.”

By “young guys,” Coach Grady meant the three juniors and me, the solo sophomore. We were supposed to do the team chores. Some might call it mild hazing, but it wasn’t really that. We pulled out the bleachers for the team meetings. We swept the floor at the end of practice. We put the balls back on the rack and locked them up.

Today Brandon helped out. He didn't have to, but as captain, he was that kind of guy. He and I picked up the balls and put them on the rack. Again I couldn't help but notice that he wasn't himself.

"I figured you'd be happy," I said.

"Why's that?"

"You were the one who thought Troy got a raw deal."

He nodded slowly. "I guess I did." Then he looked at me. "Where were you last night?"

"What do you mean?"

"Before you came to my house. Where were you?"

There had been no reason last night to tell him about breaking into the shed. There was even less reason now. "Why?"

"Do you know why they're making us retest?"

I started spinning a ball on my finger. "No."

"Because the old specimens got contaminated."

The ball dropped off my finger. It landed on the floor. The sound echoed in the now-still gym. "How?" I asked.

"Someone broke into the storage center last night."

"What storage center?"

"The town has a storage center where they keep all the drug samples. Last night someone broke into it."

I swallowed. "Where's this storage center?"

"It's in a shed off the circle. Behind town hall."

It was like someone had suddenly encased my arms and legs in cement. "I thought that shed was owned by Buck's father."

"Huh? That's public land. Buck's father has nothing to do with it. It's owned by the town. That's where they keep all the urine specimens—the ones already tested and the backups. But because someone broke in, no one can say if something's been switched or tainted or whatever. That's why they've all been voided."

I staggered back, suddenly dizzy. I could feel the blood rushing to my face. "Do they know who broke in?"

"No," Brandon said. "But the police said it was someone tall."

CHAPTER 44

Troy was waiting for me in the car. He had the same big smile on his face, but now I saw it for what it was. Not friendship. Not sportsmanship or teamwork.

It was the smile of someone mocking me.

I went around to his side of the car. The window was open. I reached in with both hands, grabbed him by the lapels, and pulled him straight out the window.

“What the . . . ?”

“You set me up!” I shouted.

Troy didn’t fight back. He just kept smiling at me. “You don’t want to make a scene, Mickey.”

“You never saw Randy and Buck go into that shed.”

“Where’s your phone?”

“What?”

“I want to make sure you’re not recording this. Get in the car and take your phone out where I can see it.”

I wanted to punch him.

Troy pushed me off him, opened his door, and slid back into the car. I was at a loss about what to do.

“You deaf?” Troy asked. “Get in.”

I walked back around and got into the front passenger seat of his red sports car.

“Now show me your phone.”

I took it out and put it on the console. He checked it to make sure that I wasn't taping the conversation. I wasn't. I should have been, but I wasn't thinking straight. I had let my anger take over. I needed to calm down.

"Is Randy even a drug dealer?" I asked.

"Oh, that part was true," Troy said. "Where do you think I got the steroids?"

So there it was. He'd done them. And I had helped him get away with it—me, the dope who claimed that people could change. Ema had said that they couldn't. Normally I enjoyed irony. Not today.

"I'm going to tell the coaches," I said.

"And what exactly are you going to tell them, Mickey?"

"That we broke into that shed. That I thought . . ."

Troy just kept smiling at me. "Think it through a minute."

I said nothing.

"First off," Troy continued, "you know that the circle has several new security cameras, right?"

"So?"

"So the break-in occurred, according to the police report, at nine fifteen P.M. When they look through the security footage, are they going to see me leaving the circle heading toward the lab?" He flashed the grin. "Or you—by yourself?"

I remembered now that he had been waiting across the street—on the side of the Y. I had wondered why he had done that, but I never . . .

"Second, if they were to check on my alibi, they'd see that I checked into the YMCA for weightlifting at nine o'clock and checked out again a little after ten. You swipe your card to go in and out. It's all computerized. Oh, they won't know that I turned off the emergency exit alarm, snuck out a side exit, and met you. They'll only be able to confirm that I was at the Y the whole time."

I just looked at him, dumbstruck.

"And, third, there's this cute little video I made with my camera phone. Don't worry. I have copies. If need be, I can send it anonymously to the police or even the media."

It was a short video, just a few seconds—me inside the shed. I remembered now when he came into the room and hit me with the flashlight. I hadn't realized at the time that his video camera was on.

I sat there, feeling numb.

Troy started up the car and pulled out. Danny Brown and a couple of the other guys walked by. Troy waved at them. I didn't.

"It will be your word against mine," Troy said, "and all the physical evidence will back me up. I bet you left fingerprints at the scene, didn't you? I made sure not to touch anything. I stayed hidden when you ran. The police followed you. They know the suspect was tall. I'm not."

I tried to strike back. "But I have no motive."

"Sure you do, Mickey."

"What?"

"You wanted to be the big hero," Troy said. "You wanted to get me back on the team. You're a troubled new kid with no friends and figured this was your way to ingratiate yourself with the popular crowd."

I shook my head. How could I have not seen this coming? But I knew the answer. Troy, in his own horrible way, had nailed it on the head. I had wanted to fit in. Hadn't Ema warned me about that? But I wouldn't listen. I had wanted to be liked. I wanted to be part of the team. I had wanted Troy to be innocent because it would serve my purposes. More than that, I had wanted to be the one to prove him innocent—to be the big hero.

And in the end, Troy was guilty. He had lied and cheated, and now he sat across from me with a big smile on his face.

"So, sure, Mickey, you can tell on me. But think it through. Even if somehow they did believe you—even if they ignored all the physical evidence I have and believed every word you say—well, then what? At best, we both get thrown off the team. You still broke into that storage shed. You can't escape from that fact."

"Wow," I said.

"What?"

"You thought of everything, Troy."

The grin was back. "I don't want to brag but, yeah, I did."

I was trapped. I was searching for an escape route. There was none.

"But it's not all bad," Troy said.

I said nothing. He made a right turn.

"We're teammates now. You saw today how good we can be. We're going to win the states, and now that you have my blessing, the entire team loves you. We are going to win a lot of games together. We are going to

celebrate and go far, and then next year, I'll be gone to a top-echelon college and you'll be the new team leader."

Troy stopped the car in front of Uncle Myron's house. He leaned across me and opened the door.

"Cheer up, Mickey. It's all going to be fine. Just be smart about it. See you tomorrow at practice, okay?"

CHAPTER 45

I texted Ema. No reply. I called her. No answer.

I sat at the kitchen table and stewed. Forget her. Hadn't she said that she'd be there when I got hurt from this? She'd known, hadn't she? She tried to make me see what Troy was, but I wouldn't open my eyes. She knew that I'd have to make a big mistake like this and that it would hurt. How had she put it?

I want to protect you from that pain. But I can't. I can only tell you that when it hurts, I'll be there for you.

And then she added, *Always.*

"So where are you now?" I said out loud.

An hour later, Uncle Myron came home. He saw the expression on my face and said, "What happened?"

I wasn't allowed to tell him about Abeona. That was part of the rules. Both Lizzie Sobek and Dylan Shaykes had made that crystal clear to me. But I could tell him about Troy. I could tell him about how my wanting to belong to a team had ruined everything.

Uncle Myron listened with great patience and even understanding. When I finished, he asked one simple question: "Do you know what you're going to do?"

I gave a simple answer: "No."

"Good," he said. "You should sleep on it. Or maybe it's more accurate to say, you should toss and turn on it."

"Yeah," I said. "I don't expect to get much sleep."

“Don’t beat yourself up. You messed up. We all do.”

“Even you,” I said.

It wasn’t a question.

“Yeah,” Myron said. “I messed up. I thought I was helping your dad all those years ago. It ends up, I made him run away. And, yeah, I know that if I hadn’t done that, he’d be alive right now. I live with that ghost every day. And your father isn’t my only ghost. There are a lot more who won’t let me go.”

“Myron?”

“Yeah?”

“How do you live with that?”

“With what, the ghosts?”

“Yeah. How do you live with them?”

“You don’t have much choice. What else are you going to do?”

“That’s it?” I frowned. “That’s your answer.”

“Mostly, yeah. And I try to remember that the mistakes I made were just that. Mistakes. I never meant to hurt anyone. Sometimes you try to do right but wrong still seems to find you. I remind myself of that. And I also remember that it’s not the battle, it’s the war.”

“Meaning?”

“Meaning in the end, I’ve done more good than evil. I’ve saved more than I’ve harmed. You are a sum of your life, not just one part.”

I nodded. He started to walk away. “Myron?”

“What?”

“Dad wouldn’t want you to blame himself,” I said.

“I know,” Myron replied. “And that just makes it harder.”

CHAPTER 46

I didn't sleep. But in a little while, none of that would matter.

In fact, what Troy Taylor had done to me wouldn't matter either.

As I grew more tired, delirium started to set in. I saw Troy's mocking grin. Then I saw Luther's mocking grin. Sometimes the smiles were superimposed on top of each other. Sometimes one face slowly transformed into the other.

Luther and Troy. My enemies. My Butchers.

At 6:00 A.M., still lying on my back, I heard the phone ring. Early, I thought.

A few minutes later, I heard the basement door open. Uncle Myron trudged down the stairs slowly. I sat up when I saw his face. It looked like someone had just punched him in the stomach.

"Who was on the phone?" I asked.

"Buck's father."

"What happened?"

Uncle Myron swallowed hard. "Buck."

"What about him?"

"He's dead."

CHAPTER 47

Speed was of the essence, so I asked Myron to drive me to Ema's house.

"Was Ema close to Buck?" Myron asked.

He saw the look on my face, nodded, and grabbed his keys. We sprinted to the car. He gave me details, though it all came to me through a haze. Buck's body was found buried in the woods not far from his father's gym. The news hadn't been released to the media yet. Myron had been called in his "professional capacity."

I wasn't sure what he meant by that.

We reached the front gate. There were two lion heads on either side. Uncle Myron had already called Angelica Wyatt, Ema's mom, so the gate was open. We drove through and up the long hill toward the estate.

"The cause of death is still unknown," Uncle Myron said.

"But he was murdered, right?"

"I don't think so."

In front of us, the huge baronial mansion started to come into view.

"Wait, you said someone buried him in the woods."

"Yes."

"So how could it not be murder?" I asked.

He didn't reply. Or maybe I didn't wait long enough for the answer. We'd arrived. I said, "Stay here," and hopped out of the car. Before I knocked on the door, Angelica Wyatt opened it. I hesitated for a moment. It is odd what star power does to a person. I had only met her in person a

couple of times, so seeing her in the flesh, after so many years on the screen, still felt surreal.

Angelica Wyatt crossed her arms and blocked the door. “What’s going on?”

“I need to talk to Ema.”

“What happened with you two?”

“Nothing. If I could just—”

“She’s been crying since she got home.”

That slowed me down a second. “She’s been crying?”

“All night. She won’t say a word to me or Niles. She just”—Angelica Wyatt started welling up too—“cries.”

“Does she know . . . ?”

“Know what?”

“Please, I just need to talk to her. Where is she?”

“The basement.”

I didn’t hesitate now. I knew the way. I ran past her, nearly slipping on the Italian marble floor. I ran toward the kitchen, veered right, found the basement door. I didn’t bother knocking. I opened it and started down the stairs.

“Ema?”

The room was dark. There were faint lights above the Angelica Wyatt movie posters. I couldn’t see much with it. But I could hear the cries.

Ema was sitting on a beanbag chair. I started toward her, but she put her hand up. “Don’t.” She looked up and met my eye. The tears were still on her face. She didn’t bother to wipe them away. Gone was the heavy makeup, the black lipstick, the temporary tattoos. Ema looked so young right now. She looked young and vulnerable and really, in a way I don’t think I ever fully noticed before, pretty.

“I need to tell you something,” I said.

“Go ahead. Tell me from there.”

I took a deep breath. I had never delivered devastating news like this. I wasn’t sure of the protocol, but the fact that she was already sobbing made me rush it. “It’s Buck,” I said. “He’s dead.”

I wasn’t sure what I expected. I figured that she’d start sobbing again. But that wasn’t what happened. Instead she stood and said, “Thanks for letting me know.”

I waited.

“That’s it?”

She didn’t reply.

“You’ve been crying,” I said.

There was something close to anger in her tone. “You’re so perceptive, Mickey.”

“Why have you been crying?”

Again she didn’t reply. She didn’t have to. The answer was obvious.

“You knew already,” I said. “But how? They just found his body. The media . . .” And then I saw it. “My God. That’s what Buck’s mother told you, didn’t she?”

“She knew who I was,” Ema said. “She found Buck’s e-mails to me. She knew what I meant to him. And what he meant to me.”

“I don’t understand.”

“She said that she didn’t want me to live not knowing the truth. Or thinking Buck had just carelessly broken my heart. But I don’t think that was it. I think she needed someone to confide in. So she made me swear never to tell.”

“And you agreed?”

Ema nodded. “I agreed.”

“And that’s why you didn’t tell me about it yesterday?”

“No,” Ema said. “That had nothing to do with it.”

“But you said . . . wait, what did Buck’s mother tell you exactly?”

“She talked about how Buck had felt all that pressure. Your buddy Troy added to it. Buck needed to get bigger and stronger. So, yes, he took steroids. A lot of them. And then we met online—and he started to change. But, like Jared said, he was still torn between his two worlds.”

I swallowed. “What happened to him, Ema? How did he die?”

“His brother, Randy.”

“He killed him?”

“In a sense,” Ema said. “Randy thinks he understands how these drugs work. He doesn’t. I don’t know if Buck had a bad reaction to them. I don’t know if he took too many of them accidentally. I don’t know if he took too many on purpose.”

“He overdosed?”

Her tears came freely now. “Yeah,” she said. “He overdosed. He was alone and he shot this stuff into his veins and . . .”

“But his body,” I said. “It was buried in the woods. If it was an overdose . . .”

“Think about it, Mickey.”

I tried, but it wasn’t coming to me.

“The NFL draft was coming up,” Ema said. “Randy was already secretly fighting a positive steroid test. If this came out, if they found out Buck had overdosed because of Randy . . .”

I shook my head. My eyes went wide. “Parents would never do that.”

“You don’t get it.”

“What?”

“Of course they would. Buck’s mother said it clear as day. Buck was dead. There was nothing they could do for him. They had another son. He’d lose everything. He’d probably go to jail on drug charges and maybe even for manslaughter. She and I sat at her kitchen table, Mickey. She looked me in the eye and said, ‘We lost one son, but we didn’t have to lose two. What good would it do to destroy Randy’s life too?’”

I couldn’t believe it, but it all made a strange, horrible kind of sense. “So they buried Buck’s body,” I said. “They made up that story about him going to live with his mother. Who’d check a remote island? And even if they did, she could just say, what, Buck was at work or traveling.”

Ema nodded. “They hadn’t really thought it all out, but eventually she would move overseas. She’d tell people that she and Buck were living in Europe.”

“My God. That’s awful.”

“And yet it would work. Who’d question it? In a horrible way, it’s logical and even loving. They couldn’t save the one child—”

“So they tried to save the other,” I said, finishing the thought.

I thought about what Uncle Myron had said, about the mistakes that cost my father his life, about the ghosts that haunt him even now. “Still,” I said. “How do you live with that?”

“I’m not sure that she could.”

“So you think, what, you were, like, her confession.”

“I think she just needed to confide in someone. She knew I cared about him. She thought that maybe I even loved him. So she told me the truth and

swore me to secrecy.”

We stood there, feeling the full weight of the moment.

“But now Buck’s body has been found,” I said.

“Yes.”

“Hours after you learned the truth and promised not to tell.”

“Yes.”

“That’s some coincidence,” I said.

“No coincidence. You see, that’s what Buck’s mom didn’t count on.”

“What?”

“She loved both her sons,” Ema said. “But I loved only one.”

The room grew very still.

“You called the police?” I asked.

“No. I stopped at the library after I left you. I sent an anonymous e-mail to them. I told them where Buck’s body was. I told them how he died. I told them the truth. With the clues I gave them, they’ll put it all together.”

We stood there. Upstairs I heard voices. Myron had come into the house after all. He was talking to Ema’s mom. They were right above us. And they were a million miles away. Everyone else was a million miles away. Right now, in this basement, there was only Ema and I and maybe the ghost of a teenage boy who was no longer buried alone in the woods.

CHAPTER 48

By noon, the media was all over the story.

Buck's family was arrested. None were charged with murder. I don't know what the charge is for hiding your own son's body to protect your other son from prosecution. Whatever that was, that's what the parents were both charged with. A search of the house found steroids and other banned substances in Randy's room. I don't know what charges were filed against him, but it sounded like a lot of them.

I only knew that it was over for me. Except, of course, it wasn't.
Not even close.

• • •

A week later, Uncle Myron and I went to Buck's funeral.

When we got back to the house, we sat in the kitchen.

We didn't say a word for a very long time. We just sat in our dark suits and stared into space. Buck was dead. I couldn't believe it. The finality of it was something I still couldn't comprehend.

"So young," Uncle Myron said with a shake of his head. "I know you've heard this before, Mickey, but you always have to be careful. Life can be so fragile."

We sat in silence again. I loosened my tie. Time passed. I can't say how much.

"I know it seems irrelevant now," Myron said. "But do you know what you're going to do about Troy and the basketball team?"

I nodded. "No choice really."

He just waited.

"I'm going to tell Coach Grady the truth."

"The truth will get you thrown off the team," Myron said.

"Too bad," I said.

"It's not the end of the world."

In light of what we had just seen, I knew that was true. But it still hurt.

"There will be next season," Myron said.

I couldn't imagine it right now, but maybe he was right. Or we could move. Mom might be better again. But I couldn't let Troy get away with it. Every basket we'd make would feel tainted. There would be no joy. That was the problem with doing the wrong thing for whatever reasons.

It never feels right.

Uncle Myron opened the fridge and sighed.

"What?"

"We're out of Yoo-hoo."

Myron drank this chocolate soda called Yoo-hoo nonstop. "There's more in the basement," I said. "You want me to get it?"

"No, I'll do it."

He started down the stairs. I was alone. I walked over to the sink. The room was silent. Silent, I thought, as a tomb.

Maybe that was it.

I started thinking now about silence. More specifically, I started to think how silent this kitchen was at this very moment. I looked over at our refrigerator. I started thinking about how Bat Lady's refrigerator was so noisy. I leaned closer toward the sink. Through the pipes, I could hear Myron whistling some old song. So maybe that was it.

Or maybe it was when Myron whistled that song.

Or maybe it was when I realized that I could hear him faintly through the pipes.

Or maybe it was because I realized how quiet our refrigerator was and if it'd been noisy—if it'd been like Bat Lady's—I'd never hear that faint noise.

Especially if I was old. Especially if I played music a lot.

I felt a cold pinprick at the base on my neck.

Bat Lady had turned off the music too. That was what she said. She turned off the music so she could hear the doorbell when the repairman came. Her kitchen had been silent for the first time in years.

Silent. Like this one.

No refrigerator noise. No music.

And that was when she heard the faint sound of my father's voice.

Like I was hearing the faint sound of Myron's.

The cold pinprick grew and spread.

"Oh my God," I said to myself. Then in a panic, I started shouting,
"Myron! Myron!"

At the sound of my voice, he ran up the stairs as fast as he could.

"What's wrong? Are you okay?"

"Do you have an axe?"

"A what?"

"An axe? An axe!"

"In the garage. Why?"

"Get in the car."

"Where are we going?"

"Just . . . just get in the car."

CHAPTER 49

It was still daylight when we got to Bat Lady's house.

I was out of the car before Myron pulled to a complete stop. I had the axe in my hand. I ran through the crime-scene tape. The tape made sense now. The police hadn't put it up.

Luther had.

He wanted to keep people away.

That was why he set the house on fire too. He wasn't trying to kill Bat Lady or me.

He wanted us gone.

"Mickey? Where are you going?"

Someone had locked the garage door. I took the axe, aimed at the knob, and smashed it open. I found the trapdoor and threw it back.

"Mickey?" Myron said again.

The secret room that had been sealed off all those years—it was soundproof. That was what Dylan Shaykes had told me. But he also said it had huge food supplies and a shower and a toilet. It had plumbing.

And if you had plumbing, there were pipes.

You couldn't make those soundproof. Sound could always find its way through pipes, no matter how distant and faint.

The dead never speak to me, Bat Lady had said.

Could she be right? Oh please, please, let her be right . . .

I found the hidden door to the sealed secret room. There was no way I was going to bust it open, even with the axe. The door was thick steel.

Instead I took the axe and started pounding the dirt just outside the door frame.

I thought about Luther and little Ricky trapped in this room all those years ago.

I thought about him in there watching the only person he ever loved slowly suffer and die.

He blamed my father for that.

What better revenge, I thought, than to lock my father down there alone for the rest of his life?

Uncle Myron was down the ladder now. "What is this place?"

I could hear the awe in his voice. I didn't answer. Seeing what I was doing, Myron ran down the corridor and found a metal bar. He started working on the other side of the frame. I swung the axe until exhaustion. Then I kept going. When I needed one short break, Myron took over.

I pounded on the door. "Hello?"

No reply.

Was I wrong?

I took the axe back. Myron worked with the metal bar.

Finally, after half an hour, I felt the door budge just the slightest bit. That propelled me. Or worse. I may have lost my mind at that stage. I don't know. But I started wielding the axe harder and harder, tears running down my face, my muscles so far beyond exhaustion, I didn't know what would happen next.

"Please," I cried. "Please . . ."

In the corner of my eye I could see Myron watching me, wondering what to do, whether he should grab me and stop my frenzy.

He looked as though he was about to do just that when the heavy door finally gave way.

It fell into the darkened space with a great thud. For a moment, no one moved. Nothing happened. There was no light in the room. I stopped breathing. I dropped my axe, reached into my pocket, and pulled out my phone.

As I switched on the light, I saw a figure rise before me in silhouette. I lifted the beam toward a familiar face.

My heart stopped.

The face was drawn and bearded, but I recognized it even before I heard Myron gasp out loud.

With my legs shaking, I stepped into the room and managed to say just one word.

“Dad.”

EPILOGUE

Ten minutes later, I walked into another dark room.

After I said his name, my father ran to me. I wrapped my arms around him and just collapsed. But my dad held me up. He held me up for a very long time. Pain is a funny thing. It can't endure in the face of hope. Even as my father held me, even as I knew that we weren't out of the woods yet, I could feel so much of my old pain subside. I could feel my wounds closing up as though something divine had touched me.

Maybe it had. What really is more divine than a parent's love?

My father was alive.

For a long time I wouldn't let myself believe it. I held on, afraid to let him go. I just held on tighter and tighter. See, I had been here before, in dreams. I would see my father in my sleep and I would hold him like this, tighter and tighter, and then the dream would start to end and I would shout, "No, please don't go!" but slowly, as I awoke, he would fade.

I'd wake up alone.

Not this time. I held on. And when I finally let go, my father didn't go anywhere.

"Oh my God," Myron shouted, running toward us. The two brothers hugged so hard that they both fell on the floor. Myron cried. We all did. We cried. Then we laughed. Then we cried again. Eventually Myron let my dad go. Then Uncle Myron picked up his cell phone and called my grandparents.

Boy, did that lead to more crying.

My father, Brad Bolitar, had been down in that secret room alone, in the dark, for nearly eight months. But he would be fine. Luther was still out there. But capturing him would wait for another day.

When I met again with Spoon, Ema, and Rachel—when I told them about this amazing discovery—we celebrated. But not for long. Because we also knew the truth.

It wasn't over for the four of us.

We had more questions to answer. We had more children to rescue.

But all of that could wait.

Right now, as my father and I faced each other in that tunnel, there was something that mattered much more to me.

"We have to go," I said to him.

Dad nodded. I think somehow he understood.

• • •

So now we were walking into another dark room. He stayed in the doorway, out of sight. I moved toward her bed.

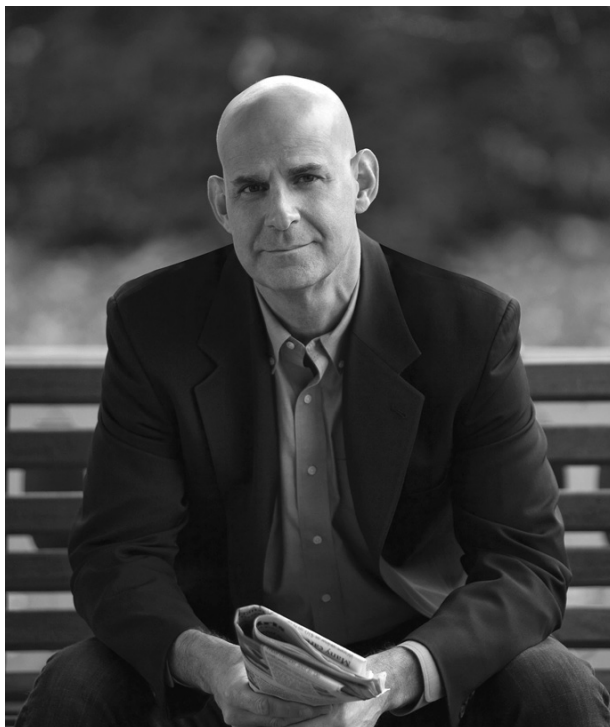
"Mom?"

My mother looked up and saw the expression on my face. "What is it, sweetheart? What's wrong?"

I choked back the tears. "Remember I said the next time I came back, I was bringing Dad?"

"What? I don't understand . . ."

And then my father stepped away from the doorway and came toward us.



Credit: Claudio Marinesco

HARLAN COBEN *is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of numerous adult novels and the young adult novels Shelter and Seconds Away. He has won the Edgar Award, Shamus Award, and Anthony Award—the first author to receive all three. His books are published in forty-one languages—with over 50 million copies in print worldwide—and have been #1 bestsellers in over a dozen countries. Harlan lives in New Jersey.*

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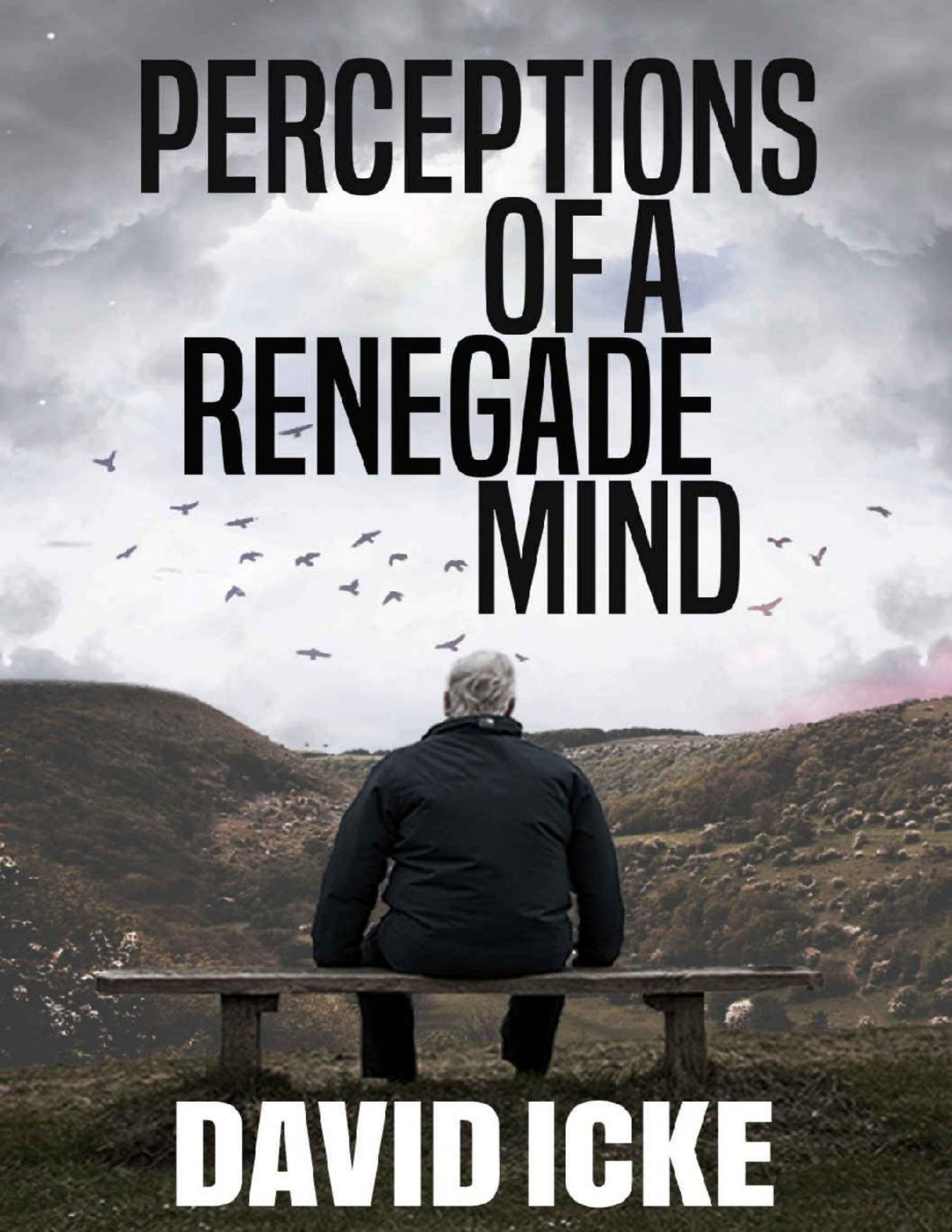
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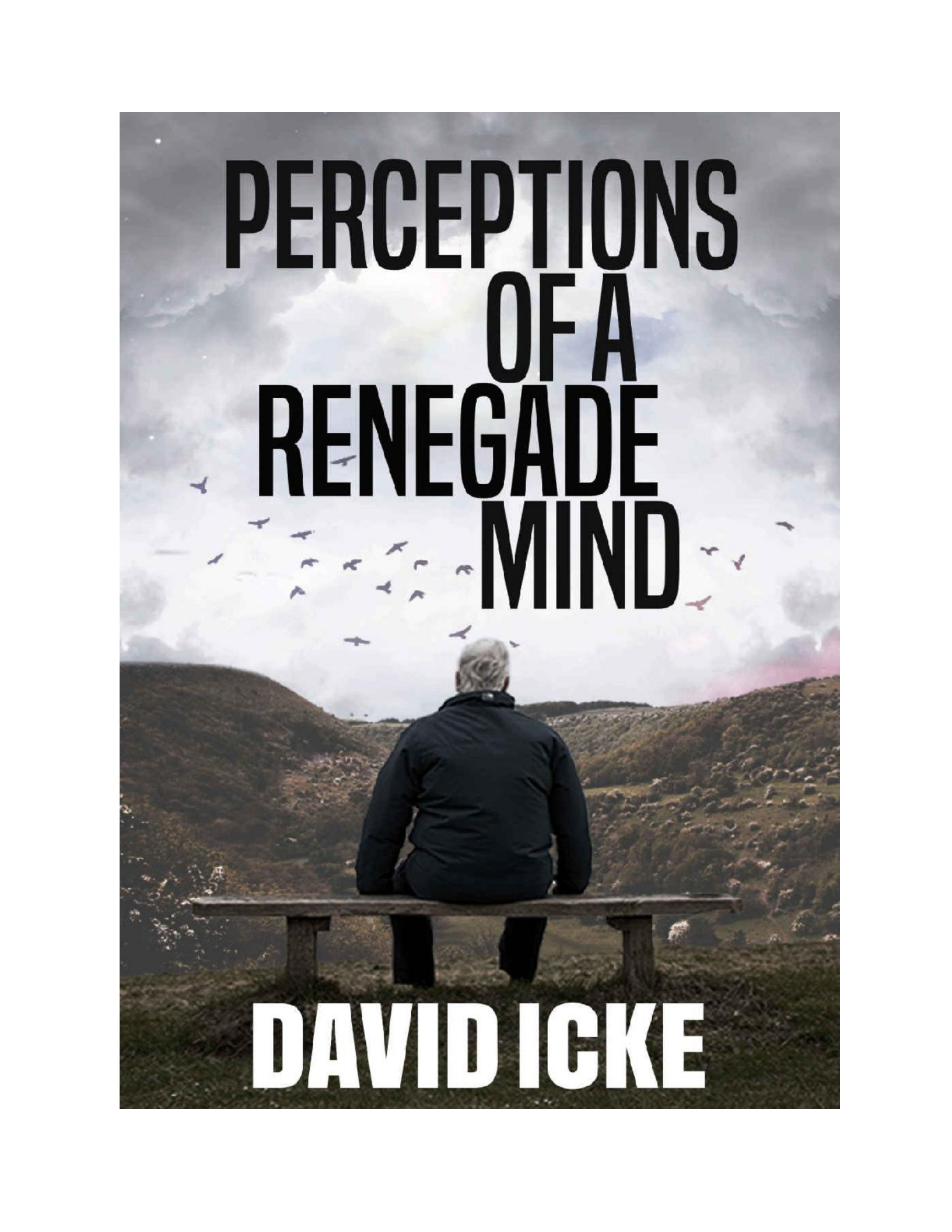


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A person with grey hair, wearing a dark jacket, is seen from behind, sitting on a wooden bench. They are looking out over a vast, hilly landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky. A large flock of birds is flying in the sky, some appearing to be in motion. The overall mood is contemplative and expansive.

PERCEPTIONS OF A RENEGADE MIND

DAVID ICKE



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PERCEPTIONS OF A RENEGADE MIND

A flock of small, stylized birds is arranged in a loose circular pattern around the word "MIND". The birds are depicted in various flight poses, some facing left, some right, and some in between, creating a sense of movement and a vortex-like effect.

DAVID ICKE

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Renegade:

Adjective

‘Having rejected tradition: Unconventional.’

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Acquiescence to tyranny is the death of the spirit

You may be 38 years old, as I happen to be. And one day, some great opportunity stands before you and calls you to stand up for some great principle, some great issue, some great cause. And you refuse to do it because you are afraid ... You refuse to do it because you want to live longer ... You're afraid that you will lose your job, or you are afraid that you will be criticised or that you will lose your popularity, or you're afraid that somebody will stab you, or shoot at you or bomb your house; so you refuse to take the stand.

Well, you may go on and live until you are 90, but you're just as dead at 38 as you would be at 90. And the cessation of breathing in your life is but the belated announcement of an earlier death of the spirit.

Martin Luther King

**How the few control the many and always have – the many do
whatever they're told**

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

The mist is lifting slowly
I can see the way ahead
And I've left behind the empty streets
That once inspired my life
And the strength of the emotion
Is like thunder in the air
'Cos the promise that we made each other
Haunts me to the end

The secret of your beauty
And the mystery of your soul
I've been searching for in everyone I meet
And the times I've been mistaken
It's impossible to say
And the grass is growing
Underneath our feet

The words that I remember
From my childhood still are true
That there's none so blind
As those who will not see
And to those who lack the courage
And say it's dangerous to try
Well they just don't know
That love eternal will not be denied

I know you're out there somewhere
Somewhere, somewhere
I know you're out there somewhere

Somewhere you can hear my voice
I know I'll find you somehow
Somehow, somehow
I know I'll find you somehow
And somehow I'll return again to you

The Moody Blues

Are you a gutless wonder - or a Renegade Mind?

Monuments put from pen to paper,
Turns me into a gutless wonder,
And if you tolerate this,
Then your children will be next.
Gravity keeps my head down,
Or is it maybe shame ...

Manic Street Preachers

Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number.
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep have fallen on you.
Ye are many – they are few.

Percy Shelley

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CHAPTER ONE

I'm thinking' – Oh, but *are* you?

Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too
Voltaire

French-born philosopher, mathematician and scientist René Descartes became famous for his statement in Latin in the 17th century which translates into English as: 'I think, therefore I am.'

On the face of it that is true. Thought reflects perception and perception leads to both behaviour and self-identity. In that sense 'we' are what we think. But who or what is doing the thinking and is thinking the only route to perception? Clearly, as we shall see, 'we' are not always the source of 'our' perception, indeed with regard to humanity as a whole this is rarely the case; and thinking is far from the only means of perception. Thought is the village idiot compared with other expressions of consciousness that we all have the potential to access and tap into. This has to be true when we *are* those other expressions of consciousness which are infinite in nature. We have forgotten this, or, more to the point, been manipulated to forget.

These are not just the esoteric musings of the navel. The whole foundation of human control and oppression is control of perception. Once perception is hijacked then so is behaviour which is dictated by perception. Collective perception becomes collective behaviour and collective behaviour is what we call human society. Perception is all and those behind human control know that which is

why perception is the target 24/7 of the psychopathic manipulators that I call the Global Cult. They know that if they dictate perception they will dictate behaviour and collectively dictate the nature of human society. They are further aware that perception is formed from information received and if they control the circulation of information they will to a vast extent direct human behaviour. Censorship of information and opinion has become globally Nazi-like in recent years and never more blatantly than since the illusory 'virus pandemic' was triggered out of China in 2019 and across the world in 2020. Why have billions submitted to house arrest and accepted fascistic societies in a way they would have never believed possible? Those controlling the information spewing from government, mainstream media and Silicon Valley (all controlled by the same Global Cult networks) told them they were in danger from a 'deadly virus' and only by submitting to house arrest and conceding their most basic of freedoms could they and their families be protected. This monumental and provable lie became the *perception* of the billions and therefore the *behaviour* of the billions. In those few words you have the whole structure and modus operandi of human control. Fear is a perception – False Emotion Appearing Real – and fear is the currency of control. In short ... get them by the balls (or give them the impression that you have) and their hearts and minds will follow. Nothing grips the dangly bits and freezes the rear-end more comprehensively than fear.

World number 1

There are two 'worlds' in what appears to be one 'world' and the prime difference between them is knowledge. First we have the mass of human society in which the population is maintained in coldly-calculated ignorance through control of information and the 'education' (indoctrination) system. That's all you really need to control to enslave billions in a perceptual delusion in which what are perceived to be *their* thoughts and opinions are ever-repeated mantras that the system has been downloading all their lives through 'education', media, science, medicine, politics and academia

in which the personnel and advocates are themselves overwhelmingly the perceptual products of the same repetition. Teachers and academics in general are processed by the same programming machine as everyone else, but unlike the great majority they never leave the 'education' program. It gripped them as students and continues to grip them as programmers of subsequent generations of students. The programmed become the programmers – the programmed programmers. The same can largely be said for scientists, doctors and politicians and not least because as the American writer Upton Sinclair said: 'It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.' If your career and income depend on thinking the way the system demands then you will – bar a few free-minded exceptions – concede your mind to the Perceptual Mainframe that I call the Postage Stamp Consensus. This is a tiny band of perceived knowledge and possibility 'taught' (downloaded) in the schools and universities, pounded out by the mainstream media and on which all government policy is founded. Try thinking, and especially speaking and acting, outside of the 'box' of consensus and see what that does for your career in the Mainstream Everything which bullies, harasses, intimidates and ridicules the population into compliance. Here we have the simple structure which enslaves most of humanity in a perceptual prison cell for an entire lifetime and I'll go deeper into this process shortly. Most of what humanity is taught as fact is nothing more than programmed belief. American science fiction author Frank Herbert was right when he said: 'Belief can be manipulated. Only knowledge is dangerous.' In the 'Covid' age belief is promoted and knowledge is censored. It was always so, but never to the extreme of today.

World number 2

A 'number 2' is slang for 'doing a poo' and how appropriate that is when this other 'world' is doing just that on humanity every minute of every day. World number 2 is a global network of secret societies and semi-secret groups dictating the direction of society via

governments, corporations and authorities of every kind. I have spent more than 30 years uncovering and exposing this network that I call the Global Cult and knowing its agenda is what has made my books so accurate in predicting current and past events. Secret societies are secret for a reason. They want to keep their hoarded knowledge to themselves and their chosen initiates and to hide it from the population which they seek through ignorance to control and subdue. The whole foundation of the division between World 1 and World 2 is *knowledge*. What number 1 knows number 2 must not. Knowledge they have worked so hard to keep secret includes (a) the agenda to enslave humanity in a centrally-controlled global dictatorship, and (b) the nature of reality and life itself. The latter (b) must be suppressed to allow the former (a) to prevail as I shall be explaining. The way the Cult manipulates and interacts with the population can be likened to a spider's web. The 'spider' sits at the centre in the shadows and imposes its will through the web with each strand represented in World number 2 by a secret society, satanic or semi-secret group, and in World number 1 – the world of the seen – by governments, agencies of government, law enforcement, corporations, the banking system, media conglomerates and Silicon Valley (Fig 1 overleaf). The spider and the web connect and coordinate all these organisations to pursue the same global outcome while the population sees them as individual entities working randomly and independently. At the level of the web governments *are* the banking system *are* the corporations *are* the media *are* Silicon Valley *are* the World Health Organization working from their inner cores as one unit. Apparently unconnected countries, corporations, institutions, organisations and people are on the *same team* pursuing the same global outcome. Strands in the web immediately around the spider are the most secretive and exclusive secret societies and their membership is emphatically restricted to the Cult inner-circle emerging through the generations from particular bloodlines for reasons I will come to. At the core of the core you would get them in a single room. That's how many people are dictating the direction of human society and its transformation

through the 'Covid' hoax and other means. As the web expands out from the spider we meet the secret societies that many people will be aware of – the Freemasons, Knights Templar, Knights of Malta, Opus Dei, the inner sanctum of the Jesuit Order, and such like. Note how many are connected to the Church of Rome and there is a reason for that. The Roman Church was established as a revamp, a rebranding, of the relocated 'Church' of Babylon and the Cult imposing global tyranny today can be tracked back to Babylon and Sumer in what is now Iraq.



Figure 1: The global web through which the few control the many. (Image Neil Hague.)

Inner levels of the web operate in the unseen away from the public eye and then we have what I call the cusp organisations located at the point where the hidden meets the seen. They include a series of satellite organisations answering to a secret society founded in London in the late 19th century called the Round Table and among them are the Royal Institute of International Affairs (UK, founded in 1920); Council on Foreign Relations (US, 1921); Bilderberg Group (worldwide, 1954); Trilateral Commission (US/worldwide, 1972); and the Club of Rome (worldwide, 1968) which was created to exploit environmental concerns to justify the centralisation of global power to 'save the planet'. The Club of Rome instigated with others the human-caused climate change hoax which has led to all the 'green

new deals' demanding that very centralisation of control. Cusp organisations, which include endless 'think tanks' all over the world, are designed to coordinate a single global policy between political and business leaders, intelligence personnel, media organisations and anyone who can influence the direction of policy in their own sphere of operation. Major players and regular attenders will know what is happening – or some of it – while others come and go and are kept overwhelmingly in the dark about the big picture. I refer to these cusp groupings as semi-secret in that they can be publicly identified, but what goes on at the inner-core is kept very much 'in house' even from most of their members and participants through a fiercely-imposed system of compartmentalisation. Only let them know what they need to know to serve your interests and no more. The structure of secret societies serves as a perfect example of this principle. Most Freemasons never get higher than the bottom three levels of 'degree' (degree of knowledge) when there are 33 official degrees of the Scottish Rite. Initiates only qualify for the next higher 'compartment' or degree if those at that level choose to allow them. Knowledge can be carefully assigned only to those considered 'safe'. I went to my local Freemason's lodge a few years ago when they were having an 'open day' to show how cuddly they were and when I chatted to some of them I was astonished at how little the rank and file knew even about the most ubiquitous symbols they use. The mushroom technique – keep them in the dark and feed them bullshit – applies to most people in the web as well as the population as a whole. Sub-divisions of the web mirror in theme and structure transnational corporations which have a headquarters somewhere in the world dictating to all their subsidiaries in different countries. Subsidiaries operate in their methodology and branding to the same centrally-dictated plan and policy in pursuit of particular ends. The Cult web functions in the same way. Each country has its own web as a subsidiary of the global one. They consist of networks of secret societies, semi-secret groups and bloodline families and their job is to impose the will of the spider and the global web in their particular country. Subsidiary networks control and manipulate the national political system, finance, corporations, media, medicine, etc. to

ensure that they follow the globally-dictated Cult agenda. These networks were the means through which the 'Covid' hoax could be played out with almost every country responding in the same way.

The 'Yessir' pyramid

Compartmentalisation is the key to understanding how a tiny few can dictate the lives of billions when combined with a top-down sequence of imposition and acquiescence. The inner core of the Cult sits at the peak of the pyramidal hierarchy of human society (Fig 2 overleaf). It imposes its will – its agenda for the world – on the level immediately below which acquiesces to that imposition. This level then imposes the Cult will on the level below them which acquiesces and imposes on the next level. Very quickly we meet levels in the hierarchy that have no idea there even is a Cult, but the sequence of imposition and acquiescence continues down the pyramid in just the same way. 'I don't know why we are doing this but the order came from "on-high" and so we better just do it.' Alfred Lord Tennyson said of the cannon fodder levels in his poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*: 'Theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do and die.' The next line says that 'into the valley of death rode the six hundred' and they died because they obeyed without question what their perceived 'superiors' told them to do. In the same way the population capitulated to 'Covid'. The whole hierarchical pyramid functions like this to allow the very few to direct the enormous many.

Eventually imposition-acquiescence-imposition-acquiescence comes down to the mass of the population at the foot of the pyramid. If they acquiesce to those levels of the hierarchy imposing on them (governments/law enforcement/doctors/media) a circuit is completed between the population and the handful of super-psychopaths in the Cult inner core at the top of the pyramid. Without a circuit-breaking refusal to obey, the sequence of imposition and acquiescence allows a staggeringly few people to impose their will upon the entirety of humankind. We are looking at the very sequence that has subjugated billions since the start of 2020. Our freedom has not been taken from us. Humanity has given it

away. Fascists do not impose fascism because there are not enough of them. Fascism is imposed by the population acquiescing to fascism. Put another way allowing their perceptions to be programmed to the extent that leads to the population giving their freedom away by giving their perceptions – their mind – away. If this circuit is not broken by humanity ceasing to cooperate with their own enslavement then nothing can change. For that to happen people have to critically think and see through the lies and window dressing and then summon the backbone to act upon what they see. The Cult spends its days working to stop either happening and its methodology is systematic and highly detailed, but it can be overcome and that is what this book is all about.

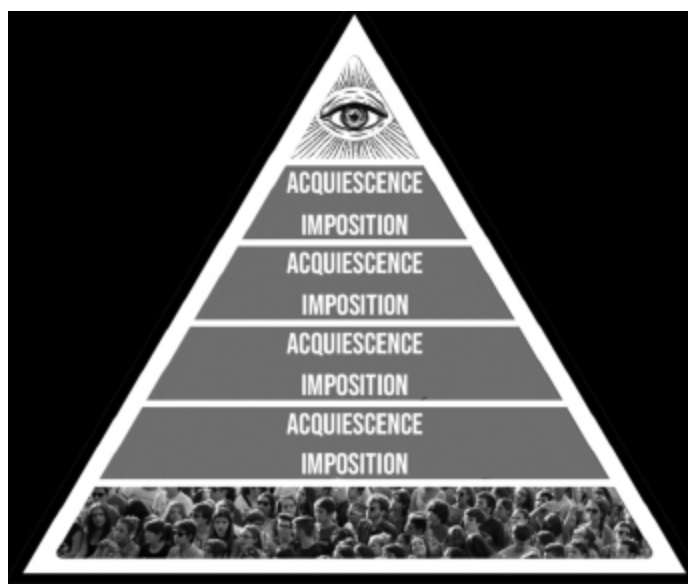


Figure 2: The simple sequence of imposition and compliance that allows a handful of people at the peak of the pyramid to dictate the lives of billions.

The Life Program

Okay, back to world number 1 or the world of the 'masses'. Observe the process of what we call 'life' and it is a perceptual download from cradle to grave. The Cult has created a global structure in which perception can be programmed and the program continually topped-up with what appears to be constant confirmation that the program is indeed true reality. The important word here is 'appears'.

This is the structure, the fly-trap, the Postage Stamp Consensus or Perceptual Mainframe, which represents that incredibly narrow band of perceived possibility delivered by the 'education' system, mainstream media, science and medicine. From the earliest age the download begins with parents who have themselves succumbed to the very programming their children are about to go through. Most parents don't do this out of malevolence and mostly it is quite the opposite. They do what they believe is best for their children and that is what the program has told them is best. Within three or four years comes the major transition from parental programming to full-blown state (Cult) programming in school, college and university where perceptually-programmed teachers and academics pass on their programming to the next generations. Teachers who resist are soon marginalised and their careers ended while children who resist are called a problem child for whom Ritalin may need to be prescribed. A few years after entering the 'world' children are under the control of authority figures representing the state telling them when they have to be there, when they can leave and when they can speak, eat, even go to the toilet. This is calculated preparation for a lifetime of obeying authority in all its forms. Reflex-action fear of authority is instilled by authority from the start. Children soon learn the carrot and stick consequences of obeying or defying authority which is underpinned daily for the rest of their life. Fortunately I daydreamed through this crap and never obeyed authority simply because it told me to. This approach to my alleged 'betters' continues to this day. There can be consequences of pursuing open-minded freedom in a world of closed-minded conformity. I spent a lot of time in school corridors after being ejected from the classroom for not taking some of it seriously and now I spend a lot of time being ejected from Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. But I can tell you that being true to yourself and not compromising your self-respect is far more exhilarating than bowing to authority for authority's sake. You don't have to be a sheep to the shepherd (authority) and the sheep dog (fear of not obeying authority).

The perceptual download continues throughout the formative years in school, college and university while script-reading 'teachers', 'academics' 'scientists', 'doctors' and 'journalists' insist that ongoing generations must be as programmed as they are. Accept the program or you will not pass your 'exams' which confirm your 'degree' of programming. It is tragic to think that many parents pressure their offspring to work hard at school to download the program and qualify for the next stage at college and university. The late, great, American comedian George Carlin said: 'Here's a bumper sticker I'd like to see: We are proud parents of a child who has resisted his teachers' attempts to break his spirit and bend him to the will of his corporate masters.' Well, the best of luck finding many of those, George. Then comes the moment to leave the formal programming years in academia and enter the 'adult' world of work. There you meet others in your chosen or prescribed arena who went through the same Postage Stamp Consensus program before you did. There is therefore overwhelming agreement between almost everyone on the basic foundations of Postage Stamp reality and the rejection, even contempt, of the few who have a mind of their own and are prepared to use it. This has two major effects. Firstly, the consensus confirms to the programmed that their download is really how things are. I mean, everyone knows that, right? Secondly, the arrogance and ignorance of Postage Stamp adherents ensure that anyone questioning the program will have unpleasant consequences for seeking their own truth and not picking their perceptions from the shelf marked: 'Things you must believe without question and if you don't you're a dangerous lunatic conspiracy theorist and a harebrained nutter'.

Every government, agency and corporation is founded on the same Postage Stamp prison cell and you can see why so many people believe the same thing while calling it their own 'opinion'. Fusion of governments and corporations in pursuit of the same agenda was the definition of fascism described by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. The pressure to conform to perceptual norms downloaded for a lifetime is incessant and infiltrates society right

down to family groups that become censors and condemners of their own 'black sheep' for not, ironically, being sheep. We have seen an explosion of that in the 'Covid' era. Cult-owned global media unleashes its propaganda all day every day in support of the Postage Stamp and targets with abuse and ridicule anyone in the public eye who won't bend their mind to the will of the tyranny. Any response to this is denied (certainly in my case). They don't want to give a platform to expose official lies. Cult-owned-and-created Internet giants like Facebook, Google, YouTube and Twitter delete you for having an unapproved opinion. Facebook boasts that its AI censors delete 97-percent of 'hate speech' before anyone even reports it. Much of that 'hate speech' will simply be an opinion that Facebook and its masters don't want people to see. Such perceptual oppression is widely known as fascism. Even Facebook executive Benny Thomas, a 'CEO Global Planning Lead', said in comments secretly recorded by investigative journalism operation Project Veritas that Facebook is 'too powerful' and should be broken up:

I mean, no king in history has been the ruler of two billion people, but Mark Zuckerberg is ... And he's 36. That's too much for a 36-year-old ... You should not have power over two billion people. I just think that's wrong.

Thomas said Facebook-owned platforms like Instagram, Oculus, and WhatsApp needed to be separate companies. 'It's too much power when they're all one together'. That's the way the Cult likes it, however. We have an executive of a Cult organisation in Benny Thomas that doesn't know there is a Cult such is the compartmentalisation. Thomas said that Facebook and Google 'are no longer companies, they're countries'. Actually they are more powerful than countries on the basis that if you control information you control perception and control human society.

I love my oppressor

Another expression of this psychological trickery is for those who realise they are being pressured into compliance to eventually

convince themselves to believe the official narratives to protect their self-respect from accepting the truth that they have succumbed to meek and subservient compliance. Such people become some of the most vehement defenders of the system. You can see them everywhere screaming abuse at those who prefer to think for themselves and by doing so reminding the compliers of their own capitulation to conformity. 'You are talking dangerous nonsense you Covidiot!!' Are you trying to convince me or yourself? It is a potent form of Stockholm syndrome which is defined as: 'A psychological condition that occurs when a victim of abuse identifies and attaches, or bonds, positively with their abuser.' An example is hostages bonding and even 'falling in love' with their kidnappers. The syndrome has been observed in domestic violence, abused children, concentration camp inmates, prisoners of war and many and various Satanic cults. These are some traits of Stockholm syndrome listed at goodtherapy.org:

- Positive regard towards perpetrators of abuse or captor [see 'Covid'].
- Failure to cooperate with police and other government authorities when it comes to holding perpetrators of abuse or kidnapping accountable [or in the case of 'Covid' cooperating with the police to enforce and defend their captors' demands].
- Little or no effort to escape [see 'Covid'].
- Belief in the goodness of the perpetrators or kidnappers [see 'Covid'].
- Appeasement of captors. This is a manipulative strategy for maintaining one's safety. As victims get rewarded – perhaps with less abuse or even with life itself – their appeasing behaviours are reinforced [see 'Covid'].
- Learned helplessness. This can be akin to 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em'. As the victims fail to escape the abuse or captivity, they may start giving up and soon realize it's just easier for everyone if they acquiesce all their power to their captors [see 'Covid'].

- Feelings of pity toward the abusers, believing they are actually victims themselves. Because of this, victims may go on a crusade or mission to 'save' [protect] their abuser [see the venom unleashed on those challenging the official 'Covid' narrative].
- Unwillingness to learn to detach from their perpetrators and heal. In essence, victims may tend to be less loyal to themselves than to their abuser [*definitely* see 'Covid'].

Ponder on those traits and compare them with the behaviour of great swathes of the global population who have defended governments and authorities which have spent every minute destroying their lives and livelihoods and those of their children and grandchildren since early 2020 with fascistic lockdowns, house arrest and employment deletion to 'protect' them from a 'deadly virus' that their abusers' perceptually created to bring about this very outcome. We are looking at mass Stockholm syndrome. All those that agree to concede their freedom will believe those perceptions are originating in their own independent 'mind' when in fact by conceding their reality to Stockholm syndrome they have by definition conceded any independence of mind. Listen to the 'opinions' of the acquiescing masses in this 'Covid' era and what gushes forth is the repetition of the official version of everything delivered unprocessed, unfiltered and unquestioned. The whole programming dynamic works this way. I must be free because I'm told that I am and so I think that I am.

You can see what I mean with the chapter theme of 'I'm thinking – Oh, but *are* you?' The great majority are not thinking, let alone for themselves. They are repeating what authority has told them to believe which allows them to be controlled. Weaving through this mentality is the fear that the 'conspiracy theorists' are right and this again explains the often hysterical abuse that ensues when you dare to contest the official narrative of anything. Denial is the mechanism of hiding from yourself what you don't want to be true. Telling people what they want to hear is easy, but it's an infinitely greater challenge to tell them what they would rather not be happening.

One is akin to pushing against an open door while the other is met with vehement resistance no matter what the scale of evidence. I don't want it to be true so I'll convince myself that it's not. Examples are everywhere from the denial that a partner is cheating despite all the signs to the reflex-action rejection of any idea that world events in which country after country act in exactly the same way are centrally coordinated. To accept the latter is to accept that a force of unspeakable evil is working to destroy your life and the lives of your children with nothing too horrific to achieve that end. Who the heck wants that to be true? But if we don't face reality the end is duly achieved and the consequences are far worse and ongoing than breaking through the walls of denial today with the courage to make a stand against tyranny.

Connect the dots – but how?

A crucial aspect of perceptual programming is to portray a world in which everything is random and almost nothing is connected to anything else. Randomness cannot be coordinated by its very nature and once you perceive events as random the idea they could be connected is waved away as the rantings of the tinfoil-hat brigade. You can't plan and coordinate random you idiot! No, you can't, but you can hide the coldly-calculated and long-planned behind the *illusion* of randomness. A foundation manifestation of the Renegade Mind is to scan reality for patterns that connect the apparently random and turn pixels and dots into pictures. This is the way I work and have done so for more than 30 years. You look for similarities in people, modus operandi and desired outcomes and slowly, then ever quicker, the picture forms. For instance: There would seem to be no connection between the 'Covid pandemic' hoax and the human-caused global-warming hoax and yet they are masks (appropriately) on the same face seeking the same outcome. Those pushing the global warming myth through the Club of Rome and other Cult agencies are driving the lies about 'Covid' – Bill Gates is an obvious one, but they are endless. Why would the same people be involved in both when they are clearly not connected? Oh, but they

are. Common themes with personnel are matched by common goals. The 'solutions' to both 'problems' are centralisation of global power to impose the will of the few on the many to 'save' humanity from 'Covid' and save the planet from an 'existential threat' (we need 'zero Covid' and 'zero carbon emissions'). These, in turn, connect with the 'dot' of globalisation which was coined to describe the centralisation of global power in every area of life through incessant political and corporate expansion, trading blocks and superstates like the European Union. If you are the few and you want to control the many you have to centralise power and decision-making. The more you centralise power the more power the few at the centre will have over the many; and the more that power is centralised the more power those at the centre have to centralise even quicker. The momentum of centralisation gets faster and faster which is exactly the process we have witnessed. In this way the hoaxed 'pandemic' and the fakery of human-caused global warming serve the interests of globalisation and the seizure of global power in the hands of the Cult inner-circle which is behind 'Covid', 'climate change' and globalisation. At this point random 'dots' become a clear and obvious picture or pattern.

Klaus Schwab, the classic Bond villain who founded the Cult's Gates-funded World Economic Forum, published a book in 2020, *The Great Reset*, in which he used the 'problem' of 'Covid' to justify a total transformation of human society to 'save' humanity from 'climate change'. Schwab said: 'The pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world.' What he didn't mention is that the Cult he serves is behind both hoaxes as I show in my book *The Answer*. He and the Cult don't have to reimagine the world. They know precisely what they want and that's why they destroyed human society with 'Covid' to 'build back better' in their grand design. Their job is not to imagine, but to get humanity to imagine and agree with their plans while believing it's all random. It must be pure coincidence that 'The Great Reset' has long been the Cult's code name for the global imposition of fascism and replaced previous code-names of the 'New World

Order' used by Cult frontmen like Father George Bush and the 'New Order of the Ages' which emerged from Freemasonry and much older secret societies. New Order of the Ages appears on the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States as 'Novus ordo seclorum' underneath the Cult symbol used since way back of the pyramid and all seeing-eye (Fig 3). The pyramid is the hierarchy of human control headed by the illuminated eye that symbolises the force behind the Cult which I will expose in later chapters. The term 'Annuit Coeptis' translates as 'He favours our undertaking'. We are told the 'He' is the Christian god, but 'He' is not as I will be explaining.



Figure 3: The all-seeing eye of the Cult 'god' on the Freemason-designed Great Seal of the United States and also on the dollar bill.

Having you on

Two major Cult techniques of perceptual manipulation that relate to all this are what I have called since the 1990s Problem-Reaction-Solution (PRS) and the Totalitarian Tiptoe (TT). They can be uncovered by the inquiring mind with a simple question: Who benefits? The answer usually identifies the perpetrators of a given action or happening through the concept of 'he who most benefits from a crime is the one most likely to have committed it'. The Latin 'Cue bono?' – Who benefits? – is widely attributed to the Roman orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero. No wonder it goes back so far when the concept has been relevant to human behaviour since

history was recorded. Problem-Reaction-Solution is the technique used to manipulate us every day by covertly creating a problem (or the illusion of one) and offering the solution to the problem (or the illusion of one). In the first phase you create the problem and blame someone or something else for why it has happened. This may relate to a financial collapse, terrorist attack, war, global warming or pandemic, anything in fact that will allow you to impose the 'solution' to change society in the way you desire at that time. The 'problem' doesn't have to be real. PRS is manipulation of perception and all you need is the population to believe the problem is real. Human-caused global warming and the 'Covid pandemic' only have to be *perceived* to be real for the population to accept the 'solutions' of authority. I refer to this technique as NO-Problem-Reaction-Solution. Billions did not meekly accept house arrest from early 2020 because there was a real deadly 'Covid pandemic' but because they perceived – believed – that to be the case. The antidote to Problem-Reaction-Solution is to ask who benefits from the proposed solution. Invariably it will be anyone who wants to justify more control through deletion of freedom and centralisation of power and decision-making.

The two world wars were Problem-Reaction-Solutions that transformed and realigned global society. Both were manipulated into being by the Cult as I have detailed in books since the mid-1990s. They dramatically centralised global power, especially World War Two, which led to the United Nations and other global bodies thanks to the overt and covert manipulations of the Rockefeller family and other Cult bloodlines like the Rothschilds. The UN is a stalking horse for full-blown world government that I will come to shortly. The land on which the UN building stands in New York was donated by the Rockefellers and the same Cult family was behind Big Pharma scalpel and drug 'medicine' and the creation of the World Health Organization as part of the UN. They have been stalwarts of the eugenics movement and funded Hitler's race-purity expert' Ernst Rudin. The human-caused global warming hoax has been orchestrated by the Club of Rome through the UN which is

manufacturing both the 'problem' through its Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and imposing the 'solution' through its Agenda 21 and Agenda 2030 which demand the total centralisation of global power to 'save the world' from a climate hoax the United Nations is itself perpetrating. What a small world the Cult can be seen to be particularly among the inner circles. The bedfellow of Problem-Reaction-Solution is the Totalitarian Tiptoe which became the Totalitarian Sprint in 2020. The technique is fashioned to hide the carefully-coordinated behind the cover of apparently random events. You start the sequence at 'A' and you know you are heading for 'Z'. You don't want people to know that and each step on the journey is presented as a random happening while all the steps strung together lead in the same direction. The speed may have quickened dramatically in recent times, but you can still see the incremental approach of the Tiptoe in the case of 'Covid' as each new imposition takes us deeper into fascism. Tell people they have to do this or that to get back to 'normal', then this and this and this. With each new demand adding to the ones that went before the population's freedom is deleted until it disappears. The spider wraps its web around the flies more comprehensively with each new diktat. I'll highlight this in more detail when I get to the 'Covid' hoax and how it has been pulled off. Another prime example of the Totalitarian Tiptoe is how the Cult-created European Union went from a 'free-trade zone' to a centralised bureaucratic dictatorship through the Tiptoe of incremental centralisation of power until nations became mere administrative units for Cult-owned dark suits in Brussels.

The antidote to ignorance is knowledge which the Cult seeks vehemently to deny us, but despite the systematic censorship to that end the Renegade Mind can overcome this by vociferously seeking out the facts no matter the impediments put in the way. There is also a method of thinking and perceiving – *knowing* – that doesn't even need names, dates, place-type facts to identify the patterns that reveal the story. I'll get to that in the final chapter. All you need to know about the manipulation of human society and to what end is still out there – *at the time of writing* – in the form of books, videos

and websites for those that really want to breach the walls of programmed perception. To access this knowledge requires the abandonment of the mainstream media as a source of information in the awareness that this is owned and controlled by the Cult and therefore promotes mass perceptions that suit the Cult. Mainstream media lies all day, every day. That is its function and very reason for being. Where it does tell the truth, here and there, is only because the truth and the Cult agenda very occasionally coincide. If you look for fact and insight to the BBC, CNN and virtually all the rest of them you are asking to be conned and perceptually programmed.

Know the outcome and you'll see the journey

Events seem random when you have no idea where the world is being taken. Once you do the random becomes the carefully planned. Know the outcome and you'll see the journey is a phrase I have been using for a long time to give context to daily happenings that appear unconnected. Does a problem, or illusion of a problem, trigger a proposed 'solution' that further drives society in the direction of the outcome? Invariably the answer will be yes and the random – *abracadabra* – becomes the clearly coordinated. So what is this outcome that unlocks the door to a massively expanded understanding of daily events? I will summarise its major aspects – the fine detail is in my other books – and those new to this information will see that the world they thought they were living in is a very different place. The foundation of the Cult agenda is the incessant centralisation of power and all such centralisation is ultimately in pursuit of Cult control on a global level. I have described for a long time the planned world structure of top-down dictatorship as the Hunger Games Society. The term obviously comes from the movie series which portrayed a world in which a few living in military-protected hi-tech luxury were the overlords of a population condemned to abject poverty in isolated 'sectors' that were not allowed to interact. 'Covid' lockdowns and travel bans anyone? The 'Hunger Games' pyramid of structural control has the inner circle of the Cult at the top with pretty much the entire

population at the bottom under their control through dependency for survival on the Cult. The whole structure is planned to be protected and enforced by a military-police state ([Fig 4](#)).

Here you have the reason for the global lockdowns of the fake pandemic to coldly destroy independent incomes and livelihoods and make everyone dependent on the 'state' (the Cult that controls the 'states'). I have warned in my books for many years about the plan to introduce a 'guaranteed income' – a barely survivable pittance – designed to impose dependency when employment was destroyed by AI technology and now even more comprehensively at great speed by the 'Covid' scam. Once the pandemic was played and lockdown consequences began to delete independent income the authorities began to talk right on cue about the need for a guaranteed income and a 'Great Reset'. Guaranteed income will be presented as benevolent governments seeking to help a desperate people – desperate as a direct result of actions of the same governments. The truth is that such payments are a trap. You will only get them if you do exactly what the authorities demand including mass vaccination (genetic manipulation). We have seen this theme already in Australia where those dependent on government benefits have them reduced if parents don't agree to have their children vaccinated according to an insane health-destroying government-dictated schedule. Calculated economic collapse applies to governments as well as people. The Cult wants rid of countries through the creation of a world state with countries broken up into regions ruled by a world government and super states like the European Union. Countries must be bankrupted, too, to this end and it's being achieved by the trillions in 'rescue packages' and furlough payments, trillions in lost taxation, and money-no-object spending on 'Covid' including constant all-medium advertising (programming) which has made the media dependent on government for much of its income. The day of reckoning is coming – as planned – for government spending and given that it has been made possible by printing money and not by production/taxation there is inflation on the way that has the

potential to wipe out monetary value. In that case there will be no need for the Cult to steal your money. It just won't be worth anything (see the German Weimar Republic before the Nazis took over). Many have been okay with lockdowns while getting a percentage of their income from so-called furlough payments without having to work. Those payments are dependent, however, on people having at least a theoretical job with a business considered non-essential and ordered to close. As these business go under because they are closed by lockdown after lockdown the furlough stops and it will for everyone eventually. Then what? The 'then what?' is precisely the idea.



Figure 4: The Hunger Games Society structure I have long warned was planned and now the 'Covid' hoax has made it possible. This is the real reason for lockdowns.

Hired hands

Between the Hunger Games Cult elite and the dependent population is planned to be a vicious military-police state (a fusion of the two into one force). This has been in the making for a long time with police looking ever more like the military and carrying weapons to match. The pandemic scam has seen this process accelerate so fast as

lockdown house arrest is brutally enforced by carefully recruited fascist minds and gormless system-servers. The police and military are planned to merge into a centrally-directed world army in a global structure headed by a world government which wouldn't be elected even by the election fixes now in place. The world army is not planned even to be human and instead wars would be fought, primarily against the population, using robot technology controlled by artificial intelligence. I have been warning about this for decades and now militaries around the world are being transformed by this very AI technology. The global regime that I describe is a particular form of fascism known as a technocracy in which decisions are not made by clueless and co-opted politicians but by unelected technocrats – scientists, engineers, technologists and bureaucrats. Cult-owned-and-controlled Silicon Valley giants are examples of technocracy and they already have far more power to direct world events than governments. They are with their censorship *selecting* governments. I know that some are calling the 'Great Reset' a Marxist communist takeover, but fascism and Marxism are different labels for the same tyranny. Tell those who lived in fascist Germany and Stalinist Russia that there was a difference in the way their freedom was deleted and their lives controlled. I could call it a fascist technocracy or a Marxist technocracy and they would be equally accurate. The Hunger Games society with its world government structure would oversee a world army, world central bank and single world cashless currency imposing its will on a microchipped population ([Fig 5](#)). Scan its different elements and see how the illusory pandemic is forcing society in this very direction at great speed. Leaders of 23 countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) backed the idea in March, 2021, of a global treaty for 'international cooperation' in 'health emergencies' and nations should 'come together as a global community for peaceful cooperation that extends beyond this crisis'. Cut the Orwellian bullshit and this means another step towards global government. The plan includes a cashless digital money system that I first warned about in 1993. Right at the start of 'Covid' the deeply corrupt Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the crooked and merely gofer 'head' of the World Health Organization, said it was possible to catch the 'virus' by touching cash and it was better to use cashless means. The claim was ridiculous nonsense and like the whole 'Covid' mind-trick it was nothing to do with 'health' and everything to do with pushing every aspect of the Cult agenda. As a result of the Tedros lie the use of cash has plummeted. The Cult script involves a single world digital currency that would eventually be technologically embedded in the body. China is a massive global centre for the Cult and if you watch what is happening there you will know what is planned for everywhere. The Chinese government is developing a digital currency which would allow fines to be deducted immediately via AI for anyone caught on camera breaking its fantastic list of laws and the money is going to be programmable with an expiry date to ensure that no one can accrue wealth except the Cult and its operatives.

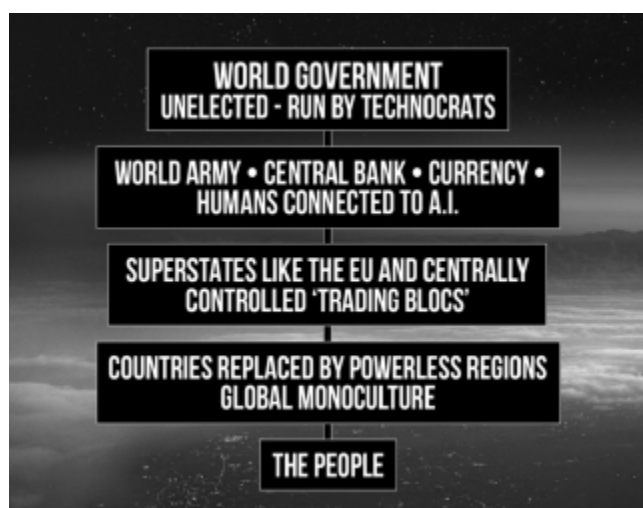


Figure 5: The structure of global control the Cult has been working towards for so long and this has been enormously advanced by the 'Covid' illusion.

Serfdom is so smart

The Cult plan is far wider, extreme, and more comprehensive than even most conspiracy researchers appreciate and I will come to the true depths of deceit and control in the chapters 'Who controls the

Cult?’ and ‘Escaping Wetiko’. Even the world that we know is crazy enough. We are being deluged with ever more sophisticated and controlling technology under the heading of ‘smart’. We have smart televisions, smart meters, smart cards, smart cars, smart driving, smart roads, smart pills, smart patches, smart watches, smart skin, smart borders, smart pavements, smart streets, smart cities, smart communities, smart environments, smart growth, smart planet ... smart *everything* around us. Smart technologies and methods of operation are designed to interlock to create a global Smart Grid connecting the entirety of human society including human minds to create a centrally-dictated ‘hive’ mind. ‘Smart cities’ is code for densely-occupied megacities of total surveillance and control through AI. Ever more destructive frequency communication systems like 5G have been rolled out without any official testing for health and psychological effects (colossal). 5G/6G/7G systems are needed to run the Smart Grid and each one becomes more destructive of body and mind. Deleting independent income is crucial to forcing people into these AI-policed prisons by ending private property ownership (except for the Cult elite). The Cult’s Great Reset now openly foresees a global society in which no one will own any possessions and everything will be rented while the Cult would own literally everything under the guise of government and corporations. The aim has been to use the lockdowns to destroy sources of income on a mass scale and when the people are destitute and in unrepayable amounts of debt (problem) Cult assets come forward with the pledge to write-off debt in return for handing over all property and possessions (solution). Everything – literally everything including people – would be connected to the Internet via AI. I was warning years ago about the coming Internet of Things (IoT) in which all devices and technology from your car to your fridge would be plugged into the Internet and controlled by AI. Now we are already there with much more to come. The next stage is the Internet of Everything (IoE) which is planned to include the connection of AI to the human brain and body to replace the human mind with a centrally-controlled AI mind. Instead of perceptions

being manipulated through control of information and censorship those perceptions would come direct from the Cult through AI. What do you think? You think whatever AI decides that you think. In human terms there would be no individual 'think' any longer. Too incredible? The ravings of a lunatic? Not at all. Cult-owned crazies in Silicon Valley have been telling us the plan for years without explaining the real motivation and calculated implications. These include Google executive and 'futurist' Ray Kurzweil who highlights the year 2030 for when this would be underway. He said:

Our thinking ... will be a hybrid of biological and non-biological thinking ... humans will be able to extend their limitations and 'think in the cloud' ... We're going to put gateways to the cloud in our brains ... We're going to gradually merge and enhance ourselves ... In my view, that's the nature of being human – we transcend our limitations.

As the technology becomes vastly superior to what we are then the small proportion that is still human gets smaller and smaller and smaller until it's just utterly negligible.

The sales-pitch of Kurzweil and Cult-owned Silicon Valley is that this would make us 'super-human' when the real aim is to make us post-human and no longer 'human' in the sense that we have come to know. The entire global population would be connected to AI and become the centrally-controlled 'hive-mind' of externally-delivered perceptions. The Smart Grid being installed to impose the Cult's will on the world is being constructed to allow particular locations – even one location – to control the whole global system. From these prime control centres, which absolutely include China and Israel, anything connected to the Internet would be switched on or off and manipulated at will. Energy systems could be cut, communication via the Internet taken down, computer-controlled driverless autonomous vehicles driven off the road, medical devices switched off, the potential is limitless given how much AI and Internet connections now run human society. We have seen nothing yet if we allow this to continue. Autonomous vehicle makers are working with law enforcement to produce cars designed to automatically pull over if they detect a police or emergency vehicle flashing from up to 100 feet away. At a police stop the car would be unlocked and the

window rolled down automatically. Vehicles would only take you where the computer (the state) allowed. The end of petrol vehicles and speed limiters on all new cars in the UK and EU from 2022 are steps leading to electric computerised transport over which ultimately you have no control. The picture is far bigger even than the Cult global network or web and that will become clear when I get to the nature of the 'spider'. There is a connection between all these happenings and the instigation of DNA-manipulating 'vaccines' (which aren't 'vaccines') justified by the 'Covid' hoax. That connection is the unfolding plan to transform the human body from a biological to a synthetic biological state and this is why synthetic biology is such a fast-emerging discipline of mainstream science. 'Covid vaccines' are infusing self-replicating synthetic genetic material into the cells to cumulatively take us on the Totalitarian Tiptoe from Human 1.0 to the synthetic biological Human 2.0 which will be physically and perceptually attached to the Smart Grid to one hundred percent control every thought, perception and deed. Humanity needs to wake up and *fast*.

This is the barest explanation of where the 'outcome' is planned to go but it's enough to see the journey happening all around us. Those new to this information will already see 'Covid' in a whole new context. I will add much more detail as we go along, but for the minutiae evidence see my mega-works, *The Answer*, *The Trigger* and *Everything You Need to Know But Have Never Been Told*.

Now – how does a Renegade Mind see the 'world'?

CHAPTER TWO

Renegade Perception

It is one thing to be clever and another to be wise

George R.R. Martin

A simple definition of the difference between a programmed mind and a Renegade Mind would be that one sees only dots while the other connects them to see the picture. Reading reality with accuracy requires the observer to (a) know the planned outcome and (b) realise that everything, but *everything*, is connected.

The entirety of infinite reality is connected – that's its very nature – and with human society an expression of infinite reality the same must apply. Simple cause and effect is a connection. The effect is triggered by the cause and the effect then becomes the cause of another effect. Nothing happens in isolation because it *can't*. Life in whatever reality is simple choice and consequence. We make choices and these lead to consequences. If we don't like the consequences we can make different choices and get different consequences which lead to other choices and consequences. The choice and the consequence are not only connected they are indivisible. You can't have one without the other as an old song goes. A few cannot control the world unless those being controlled allow that to happen – cause and effect, choice and consequence. Control – who has it and who doesn't – is a two-way process, a symbiotic relationship, involving the controller and controlled. 'They took my freedom away!!' Well, yes, but you also gave it to them. Humanity is

subjected to mass control because humanity has acquiesced to that control. This is all cause and effect and literally a case of give and take. In the same way world events of every kind are connected and the Cult works incessantly to sell the illusion of the random and coincidental to maintain the essential (to them) perception of dots that hide the picture. Renegade Minds know this and constantly scan the world for patterns of connection. This is absolutely pivotal in understanding the happenings in the world and without that perspective clarity is impossible. First you know the planned outcome and then you identify the steps on the journey – the day-by-day apparently random which, when connected in relation to the outcome, no longer appear as individual events, but as the proverbial *chain* of events leading in the same direction. I'll give you some examples:

Political puppet show

We are told to believe that politics is 'adversarial' in that different parties with different beliefs engage in an endless tussle for power. There may have been some truth in that up to a point – and only a point – but today divisions between 'different' parties are rhetorical not ideological. Even the rhetorical is fusing into one-speak as the parties eject any remaining free thinkers while others succumb to the ever-gathering intimidation of anyone with the 'wrong' opinion. The Cult is not a new phenomenon and can be traced back thousands of years as my books have documented. Its intergenerational initiatives have been manipulating events with increasing effect the more that global power has been centralised. In ancient times the Cult secured control through the system of monarchy in which 'special' bloodlines (of which more later) demanded the right to rule as kings and queens simply by birthright and by vanquishing others who claimed the same birthright. There came a time, however, when people had matured enough to see the unfairness of such tyranny and demanded a say in who governed them. Note the word – *governed* them. Not served them – *governed* them, hence government defined as 'the political direction and control exercised over the

actions of the members, citizens, or inhabitants of communities, societies, and states; direction of the affairs of a state, community, etc.' Governments exercise control over rather than serve just like the monarchies before them. Bizarrely there are still countries like the United Kingdom which are ruled by a monarch *and* a government that officially answers to the monarch. The UK head of state and that of Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand is 'selected' by who in a *single family* had unprotected sex with whom and in what order. Pinch me it can't be true. Ouch! Shit, it is. The demise of monarchies in most countries offered a potential vacuum in which some form of free and fair society could arise and the Cult had that base covered. Monarchies had served its interests but they couldn't continue in the face of such widespread opposition and, anyway, replacing a 'royal' dictatorship that people could see with a dictatorship 'of the people' hiding behind the concept of 'democracy' presented far greater manipulative possibilities and ways of hiding coordinated tyranny behind the illusion of 'freedom'.

Democracy is quite wrongly defined as government selected by the population. This is not the case at all. It is government selected by *some* of the population (and then only in theory). This 'some' doesn't even have to be the majority as we have seen so often in first-past-the-post elections in which the so-called majority party wins fewer votes than the 'losing' parties combined. Democracy can give total power to a party in government from a minority of the votes cast. It's a sleight of hand to sell tyranny as freedom. Seventy-four million Trump-supporting Americans didn't vote for the 'Democratic' Party of Joe Biden in the distinctly dodgy election in 2020 and yet far from acknowledging the wishes and feelings of that great percentage of American society the Cult-owned Biden government set out from day one to destroy them and their right to a voice and opinion. Empty shell Biden and his Cult handlers said they were doing this to 'protect democracy'. Such is the level of lunacy and sickness to which politics has descended. Connect the dots and relate them to the desired outcome – a world government run by self-appointed technocrats and no longer even elected

politicians. While operating through its political agents in government the Cult is at the same time encouraging public disdain for politicians by putting idiots and incompetents in theoretical power on the road to deleting them. The idea is to instil a public reaction that says of the technocrats: 'Well, they couldn't do any worse than the pathetic politicians.' It's all about controlling perception and Renegade Minds can see through that while programmed minds cannot when they are ignorant of both the planned outcome and the manipulation techniques employed to secure that end. This knowledge can be learned, however, and fast if people choose to get informed.

Politics may at first sight appear very difficult to control from a central point. I mean look at the 'different' parties and how would you be able to oversee them all and their constituent parts? In truth, it's very straightforward because of their structure. We are back to the pyramid of imposition and acquiescence. Organisations are structured in the same way as the system as a whole. Political parties are not open forums of free expression. They are hierarchies. I was a national spokesman for the British Green Party which claimed to be a different kind of politics in which influence and power was devolved; but I can tell you from direct experience – and it's far worse now – that Green parties are run as hierarchies like all the others however much they may try to hide that fact or kid themselves that it's not true. A very few at the top of all political parties are directing policy and personnel. They decide if you are elevated in the party or serve as a government minister and to do that you have to be a yes man or woman. Look at all the maverick political thinkers who never ascended the greasy pole. If you want to progress within the party or reach 'high-office' you need to fall into line and conform. Exceptions to this are rare indeed. Should you want to run for parliament or Congress you have to persuade the local or state level of the party to select you and for that you need to play the game as dictated by the hierarchy. If you secure election and wish to progress within the greater structure you need to go on conforming to what is acceptable to those running the hierarchy

from the peak of the pyramid. Political parties are perceptual gulags and the very fact that there are party 'Whips' appointed to 'whip' politicians into voting the way the hierarchy demands exposes the ridiculous idea that politicians are elected to serve the people they are supposed to represent. Cult operatives and manipulation has long seized control of major parties that have any chance of forming a government and at least most of those that haven't. A new party forms and the Cult goes to work to infiltrate and direct. This has reached such a level today that you see video compilations of 'leaders' of all parties whether Democrats, Republicans, Conservative, Labour and Green parroting the same Cult mantra of 'Build Back Better' and the 'Great Reset' which are straight off the Cult song-sheet to describe the transformation of global society in response to the Cult-instigated hoaxes of the 'Covid pandemic' and human-caused 'climate change'. To see Caroline Lucas, the Green Party MP that I knew when I was in the party in the 1980s, speaking in support of plans proposed by Cult operative Klaus Schwab representing the billionaire global elite is a real head-shaker.

Many parties – one master

The party system is another mind-trick and was instigated to change the nature of the dictatorship by swapping 'royalty' for dark suits that people believed – though now ever less so – represented their interests. Understanding this trick is to realise that a single force (the Cult) controls all parties either directly in terms of the major ones or through manipulation of perception and ideology with others. You don't need to manipulate Green parties to demand your transformation of society in the name of 'climate change' when they are obsessed with the lie that this is essential to 'save the planet'. You just give them a platform and away they go serving your interests while believing they are being environmentally virtuous. America's political structure is a perfect blueprint for how the two or multi-party system is really a one-party state. The Republican Party is controlled from one step back in the shadows by a group made up of billionaires and their gofers known as neoconservatives or Neocons.

I have exposed them in fine detail in my books and they were the driving force behind the policies of the imbecilic presidency of Boy George Bush which included 9/11 (see *The Trigger* for a comprehensive demolition of the official story), the subsequent 'war on terror' (war of terror) and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The latter was a No-Problem-Reaction-Solution based on claims by Cult operatives, including Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, about Saddam Hussein's 'weapons of mass destruction' which did not exist as war criminals Bush and Blair well knew.

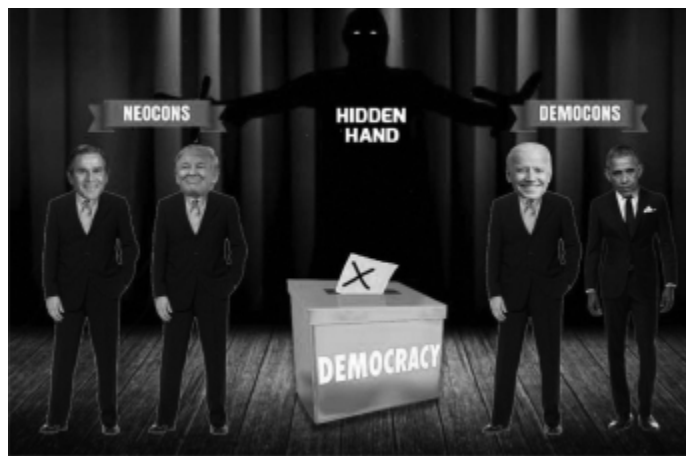


Figure 6: Different front people, different parties – same control system.

The Democratic Party has its own 'Neocon' group controlling from the background which I call the 'Democons' and here's the penny-drop – the Neocons and Democons answer to the same masters one step further back into the shadows (Fig 6). At that level of the Cult the Republican and Democrat parties are controlled by the same people and no matter which is in power the Cult is in power. This is how it works in almost every country and certainly in Britain with Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties now all on the same page whatever the rhetoric may be in their feeble attempts to appear different. Neocons operated at the time of Bush through a think tank called The Project for the New American Century which in September, 2000, published a document entitled *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources*

For a New Century demanding that America fight ‘multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars’ as a ‘core mission’ to force regime-change in countries including Iraq, Libya and Syria. Neocons arranged for Bush (‘Republican’) and Blair (‘Labour Party’) to front-up the invasion of Iraq and when they departed the Democons orchestrated the targeting of Libya and Syria through Barack Obama (‘Democrat’) and British Prime Minister David Cameron (‘Conservative Party’). We have ‘different’ parties and ‘different’ people, but the same unfolding script. The more the Cult has seized the reigns of parties and personnel the more their policies have transparently pursued the same agenda to the point where the fascist ‘Covid’ impositions of the Conservative junta of Jackboot Johnson in Britain were opposed by the Labour Party because they were not fascist enough. The Labour Party is likened to the US Democrats while the Conservative Party is akin to a British version of the Republicans and on both sides of the Atlantic they all speak the same language and support the direction demanded by the Cult although some more enthusiastically than others. It’s a similar story in country after country because it’s all centrally controlled. Oh, but what about Trump? I’ll come to him shortly. Political ‘choice’ in the ‘party’ system goes like this: You vote for Party A and they get into government. You don’t like what they do so next time you vote for Party B and they get into government. You don’t like what they do when it’s pretty much the same as Party A and why wouldn’t that be with both controlled by the same force? Given that only two, sometimes three, parties have any chance of forming a government to get rid of Party B that you don’t like you have to vote again for Party A which ... you don’t like. This, ladies and gentlemen, is what they call ‘democracy’ which we are told – wrongly – is a term interchangeable with ‘freedom’.

The cult of cults

At this point I need to introduce a major expression of the Global Cult known as Sabbatian-Frankism. Sabbatian is also spelt as Sabbatean. I will summarise here. I have published major exposés

and detailed background in other works. Sabbatian-Frankism combines the names of two frauds posing as 'Jewish' men, Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676), a rabbi, black magician and occultist who proclaimed he was the Jewish messiah; and Jacob Frank (1726-1791), the Polish 'Jew', black magician and occultist who said he was the reincarnation of 'messiah' Zevi and biblical patriarch Jacob. They worked across two centuries to establish the Sabbatian-Frankist cult that plays a major, indeed central, role in the manipulation of human society by the Global Cult which has its origins much further back in history than Sabbatai Zevi. I should emphasise two points here in response to the shrill voices that will scream 'anti-Semitism': (1) Sabbatian-Frankists are NOT Jewish and only pose as such to hide their cult behind a Jewish façade; and (2) my information about this cult has come from Jewish sources who have long realised that their society and community has been infiltrated and taken over by interloper Sabbatian-Frankists. Infiltration has been the foundation technique of Sabbatian-Frankism from its official origin in the 17th century. Zevi's Sabbatian sect attracted a massive following described as the biggest messianic movement in Jewish history, spreading as far as Africa and Asia, and he promised a return for the Jews to the 'Promised Land' of Israel. Sabbatianism was not Judaism but an inversion of everything that mainstream Judaism stood for. So much so that this sinister cult would have a feast day when Judaism had a fast day and whatever was forbidden in Judaism the Sabbatians were encouraged and even commanded to do. This included incest and what would be today called Satanism. Members were forbidden to marry outside the sect and there was a system of keeping their children ignorant of what they were part of until they were old enough to be trusted not to unknowingly reveal anything to outsiders. The same system is employed to this day by the Global Cult in general which Sabbatian-Frankism has enormously influenced and now largely controls.

Zevi and his Sabbatians suffered a setback with the intervention by the Sultan of the Islamic Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and what is now the Republic of Turkey where Zevi was located. The

Sultan gave him the choice of proving his 'divinity', converting to Islam or facing torture and death. Funnily enough Zevi chose to convert or at least appear to. Some of his supporters were disillusioned and drifted away, but many did not with 300 families also converting – only in theory – to Islam. They continued behind this Islamic smokescreen to follow the goals, rules and rituals of Sabbatianism and became known as 'crypto-Jews' or the 'Dönme' which means 'to turn'. This is rather ironic because they didn't 'turn' and instead hid behind a fake Islamic persona. The process of appearing to be one thing while being very much another would become the calling card of Sabbatianism especially after Zevi's death and the arrival of the Satanist Jacob Frank in the 18th century when the cult became Sabbatian-Frankism and plumbed still new depths of depravity and infiltration which included – still includes – human sacrifice and sex with children. Wherever Sabbatians go paedophilia and Satanism follow and is it really a surprise that Hollywood is so infested with child abuse and Satanism when it was established by Sabbatian-Frankists and is still controlled by them? Hollywood has been one of the prime vehicles for global perceptual programming and manipulation. How many believe the version of 'history' portrayed in movies when it is a travesty and inversion (again) of the truth? Rabbi Marvin Antelman describes Frankism in his book, *To Eliminate the Opiate*, as 'a movement of complete evil' while Jewish professor Gershom Scholem said of Frank in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*: 'In all his actions [he was] a truly corrupt and degenerate individual ... one of the most frightening phenomena in the whole of Jewish history.' Frank was excommunicated by traditional rabbis, as was Zevi, but Frank was undeterred and enjoyed vital support from the House of Rothschild, the infamous banking dynasty whose inner-core are Sabbatian-Frankists and not Jews. Infiltration of the Roman Church and Vatican was instigated by Frank with many Dönme 'turning' again to convert to Roman Catholicism with a view to hijacking the reins of power. This was the ever-repeating modus operandi and continues to be so. Pose as an advocate of the religion, culture or country that you want to control and then

manipulate your people into the positions of authority and influence largely as advisers, administrators and Svengalis for those that appear to be in power. They did this with Judaism, Christianity (Christian Zionism is part of this), Islam and other religions and nations until Sabbatian-Frankism spanned the world as it does today.

Sabbatian Saudis and the terror network

One expression of the Sabbatian-Frankist Dönme within Islam is the ruling family of Saudi Arabia, the House of Saud, through which came the vile distortion of Islam known as Wahhabism. This is the violent creed followed by terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS or Islamic State. Wahhabism is the hand-chopping, head-chopping 'religion' of Saudi Arabia which is used to keep the people in a constant state of fear so the interloper House of Saud can continue to rule. Al-Qaeda and Islamic State were lavishly funded by the House of Saud while being created and directed by the Sabbatian-Frankist network in the United States that operates through the Pentagon, CIA and the government in general of whichever 'party'. The front man for the establishment of Wahhabism in the middle of the 18th century was a Sabbatian-Frankist 'crypto-Jew' posing as Islamic called Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. His daughter would marry the son of Muhammad bin Saud who established the first Saudi state before his death in 1765 with support from the British Empire. Bin Saud's successors would establish modern Saudi Arabia in league with the British and Americans in 1932 which allowed them to seize control of Islam's major shrines in Mecca and Medina. They have dictated the direction of Sunni Islam ever since while Iran is the major centre of the Shiite version and here we have the source of at least the public conflict between them. The Sabbatian network has used its Wahhabi extremists to carry out Problem-Reaction-Solution terrorist attacks in the name of 'Al-Qaeda' and 'Islamic State' to justify a devastating 'war on terror', ever-increasing surveillance of the population and to terrify people into compliance. Another insight of the Renegade Mind is the streetwise understanding that

just because a country, location or people are attacked doesn't mean that those apparently representing that country, location or people are not behind the attackers. Often they are *orchestrating* the attacks because of the societal changes that can be then justified in the name of 'saving the population from terrorists'.

I show in great detail in *The Trigger* how Sabbatian-Frankists were the real perpetrators of 9/11 and not '19 Arab hijackers' who were blamed for what happened. Observe what was justified in the name of 9/11 alone in terms of Middle East invasions, mass surveillance and control that fulfilled the demands of the Project for the New American Century document published by the Sabbatian Neocons. What appear to be enemies are on the deep inside players on the same Sabbatian team. Israel and Arab 'royal' dictatorships are all ruled by Sabbatians and the recent peace agreements between Israel and Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and others are only making formal what has always been the case behind the scenes. Palestinians who have been subjected to grotesque tyranny since Israel was bombed and terrorised into existence in 1948 have never stood a chance. Sabbatian-Frankists have controlled Israel (so the constant theme of violence and war which Sabbatians love) and they have controlled the Arab countries that Palestinians have looked to for real support that never comes. 'Royal families' of the Arab world in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, etc., are all Sabbatians with allegiance to the aims of the cult and not what is best for their Arabic populations. They have stolen the oil and financial resources from their people by false claims to be 'royal dynasties' with a genetic right to rule and by employing vicious militaries to impose their will.

Satanic 'illumination'

The Satanist Jacob Frank formed an alliance in 1773 with two other Sabbatians, Mayer Amschel Rothschild (1744-1812), founder of the Rothschild banking dynasty, and Jesuit-educated fraudulent Jew, Adam Weishaupt, and this led to the formation of the Bavarian Illuminati, firstly under another name, in 1776. The Illuminati would

be the manipulating force behind the French Revolution (1789-1799) and was also involved in the American Revolution (1775-1783) before and after the Illuminati's official creation. Weishaupt would later become (in public) a Protestant Christian in archetypal Sabbatian style. I read that his name can be decoded as Adam-Weishaupt or 'the first man to lead those who know'. He wasn't a leader in the sense that he was a subordinate, but he did lead those below him in a crusade of transforming human society that still continues today. The theme was confirmed as early as 1785 when a horseman courier called Lanz was reported to be struck by lightning and extensive Illuminati documents were found in his saddlebags. They made the link to Weishaupt and detailed the plan for world takeover. Current events with 'Covid' fascism have been in the making for a very long time. Jacob Frank was jailed for 13 years by the Catholic Inquisition after his arrest in 1760 and on his release he headed for Frankfurt, Germany, home city and headquarters of the House of Rothschild where the alliance was struck with Mayer Amschel Rothschild and Weishaupt. Rothschild arranged for Frank to be given the title of Baron and he became a wealthy nobleman with a big following of Jews in Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and other European countries. Most of them would have believed he was on their side.

The name 'Illuminati' came from the Zohar which is a body of works in the Jewish mystical 'bible' called the Kabbalah. 'Zohar' is the foundation of Sabbatian-Frankist belief and in Hebrew 'Zohar' means 'splendour', 'radiance', 'illuminated', and so we have 'Illuminati'. They claim to be the 'Illuminated Ones' from their knowledge systematically hidden from the human population and passed on through generations of carefully-chosen initiates in the global secret society network or Cult. Hidden knowledge includes an awareness of the Cult agenda for the world and the nature of our collective reality that I will explore later. Cult 'illumination' is symbolised by the torch held by the Statue of Liberty which was gifted to New York by French Freemasons in Paris who knew exactly what it represents. 'Liberty' symbolises the goddess worshipped in

Babylon as Queen Semiramis or Ishtar. The significance of this will become clear. Notice again the ubiquitous theme of inversion with the Statue of 'Liberty' really symbolising mass control (Fig 7). A mirror-image statute stands on an island in the River Seine in Paris from where New York Liberty originated (Fig 8). A large replica of the Liberty flame stands on top of the Pont de l'Alma tunnel in Paris where Princess Diana died in a Cult ritual described in *The Biggest Secret*. Lucifer 'the light bringer' is related to all this (and much more as we'll see) and 'Lucifer' is a central figure in Sabbatian-Frankism and its associated Satanism. Sabbatians reject the Jewish Torah, or Pentateuch, the 'five books of Moses' in the Old Testament known as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy which are claimed by Judaism and Christianity to have been dictated by 'God' to Moses on Mount Sinai. Sabbatians say these do not apply to them and they seek to replace them with the Zohar to absorb Judaism and its followers into their inversion which is an expression of a much greater global inversion. They want to delete all religions and force humanity to worship a one-world religion – Sabbatian Satanism that also includes worship of the Earth goddess. Satanic themes are being more and more introduced into mainstream society and while Christianity is currently the foremost target for destruction the others are planned to follow.



Figure 7: The Cult goddess of Babylon disguised as the Statue of Liberty holding the flame of Lucifer the 'light bringer'.



Figure 8: Liberty's mirror image in Paris where the New York version originated.

Marx brothers

Rabbi Marvin Antelman connects the Illuminati to the Jacobins in *To Eliminate the Opiate* and Jacobins were the force behind the French Revolution. He links both to the Bund der Gerechten, or League of the Just, which was the network that inflicted communism/Marxism on the world. Antelman wrote:

The original inner circle of the Bund der Gerechten consisted of born Catholics, Protestants and Jews [Sabbatian-Frankist infiltrators], and those representatives of respective subdivisions formulated schemes for the ultimate destruction of their faiths. The heretical Catholics laid plans which they felt would take a century or more for the ultimate destruction of the church; the apostate Jews for the ultimate destruction of the Jewish religion.

Sabbatian-created communism connects into this anti-religion agenda in that communism does not allow for the free practice of religion. The Sabbatian 'Bund' became the International Communist Party and Communist League and in 1848 'Marxism' was born with the Communist Manifesto of Sabbatian assets Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It is absolutely no coincidence that Marxism, just a different name for fascist and other centrally-controlled tyrannies, is being imposed worldwide as a result of the 'Covid' hoax and nor that Marxist/fascist China was the place where the hoax originated. The reason for this will become very clear in the chapter 'Covid: The calculated catastrophe'. The so-called 'Woke' mentality has hijacked

traditional beliefs of the political left and replaced them with far-right make-believe 'social justice' better known as Marxism. Woke will, however, be swallowed by its own perceived 'revolution' which is really the work of billionaires and billionaire corporations feigning being 'Woke'. Marxism is being touted by Wokers as a replacement for 'capitalism' when we don't have 'capitalism'. We have cartelism in which the market is stitched up by the very Cult billionaires and corporations bankrolling Woke. Billionaires love Marxism which keeps the people in servitude while they control from the top. Terminally naïve Wokers think they are 'changing the world' when it's the Cult that is doing the changing and when they have played their vital part and become surplus to requirements they, too, will be targeted. The Illuminati-Jacobins were behind the period known as 'The Terror' in the French Revolution in 1793 and 1794 when Jacobin Maximillian de Robespierre and his Orwellian 'Committee of Public Safety' killed 17,000 'enemies of the Revolution' who had once been 'friends of the Revolution'. Karl Marx (1818-1883), whose Sabbatian creed of Marxism has cost the lives of at least 100 million people, is a hero once again to Wokers who have been systematically kept ignorant of real history by their 'education' programming. As a result they now promote a Sabbatian 'Marxist' abomination destined at some point to consume them. Rabbi Antelman, who spent decades researching the Sabbatian plot, said of the League of the Just and Karl Marx:

Contrary to popular opinion Karl Marx did not originate the Communist Manifesto. He was paid for his services by the League of the Just, which was known in its country of origin, Germany, as the Bund der Geächteten.

Antelman said the text attributed to Marx was the work of other people and Marx 'was only repeating what others already said'. Marx was 'a hired hack – lackey of the wealthy Illuminists'. Marx famously said that religion was the 'opium of the people' (part of the Sabbatian plan to demonise religion) and Antelman called his books, *To Eliminate the Opiate*. Marx was born Jewish, but his family converted to Christianity (Sabbatian modus operandi) and he

attacked Jews, not least in his book, *A World Without Jews*. In doing so he supported the Sabbatian plan to destroy traditional Jewishness and Judaism which we are clearly seeing today with the vindictive targeting of orthodox Jews by the Sabbatian government of Israel over 'Covid' laws. I don't follow any religion and it has done much damage to the world over centuries and acted as a perceptual straightjacket. Renegade Minds, however, are always asking *why* something is being done. It doesn't matter if they agree or disagree with what is happening – *why* is it happening is the question. The 'why?' can be answered with regard to religion in that religions create interacting communities of believers when the Cult wants to dismantle all discourse, unity and interaction (see 'Covid' lockdowns) and the ultimate goal is to delete all religions for a one-world religion of Cult Satanism worshipping their 'god' of which more later. We see the same 'why?' with gun control in America. I don't have guns and don't want them, but why is the Cult seeking to disarm the population at the same time that law enforcement agencies are armed to their molars and why has every tyrant in history sought to disarm people before launching the final takeover? They include Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and Mao who followed confiscation with violent seizing of power. You know it's a Cult agenda by the people who immediately race to the microphones to exploit dead people in multiple shootings. Ultra-Zionist Cult lackey Senator Chuck Schumer was straight on the case after ten people were killed in Boulder, Colorado in March, 2121. Simple rule ... if Schumer wants it the Cult wants it and the same with his ultra-Zionist mate the wild-eyed Senator Adam Schiff. At the same time they were calling for the disarmament of Americans, many of whom live a long way from a police response, Schumer, Schiff and the rest of these pampered clowns were sitting on Capitol Hill behind a razor-wired security fence protected by thousands of armed troops in addition to their own armed bodyguards. Mom and pop in an isolated home? They're just potential mass shooters.

Zion Mainframe

Sabbatian-Frankists and most importantly the Rothschilds were behind the creation of 'Zionism', a political movement that demanded a Jewish homeland in Israel as promised by Sabbatai Zevi. The very symbol of Israel comes from the German meaning of the name Rothschild. Dynasty founder Mayer Amschel Rothschild changed the family name from Bauer to Rothschild, or 'Red-Shield' in German, in deference to the six-pointed 'Star of David' hexagram displayed on the family's home in Frankfurt. The symbol later appeared on the flag of Israel after the Rothschilds were centrally involved in its creation. Hexagrams are not a uniquely Jewish symbol and are widely used in occult ('hidden') networks often as a symbol for Saturn (see my other books for why). Neither are Zionism and Jewishness interchangeable. Zionism is a political movement and philosophy and not a 'race' or a people. Many Jews oppose Zionism and many non-Jews, including US President Joe Biden, call themselves Zionists as does Israel-centric Donald Trump. America's support for the Israel government is pretty much a gimme with ultra-Zionist billionaires and corporations providing fantastic and dominant funding for both political parties. Former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney has told how she was approached immediately she ran for office to 'sign the pledge' to Israel and confirm that she would always vote in that country's best interests. All American politicians are approached in this way. Anyone who refuses will get no support or funding from the enormous and all-powerful Zionist lobby that includes organisations like mega-lobby group AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Trump's biggest funder was ultra-Zionist casino and media billionaire Sheldon Adelson while major funders of the Democratic Party include ultra-Zionist George Soros and ultra-Zionist financial and media mogul, Haim Saban. Some may reel back at the suggestion that Soros is an Israel-firster (Sabbatian-controlled Israel-firster), but Renegade Minds watch the actions not the words and everywhere Soros donates his billions the Sabbatian agenda benefits. In the spirit of Sabbatian inversion Soros pledged \$1 billion for a new university network to promote 'liberal values and tackle intolerance'. He made the announcement during his annual speech

at the Cult-owned World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, 2020, after his 'harsh criticism' of 'authoritarian rulers' around the world. You can only laugh at such brazen mendacity. How *he* doesn't laugh is the mystery. Translated from the Orwellian 'liberal values and tackle intolerance' means teaching non-white people to hate white people and for white people to loathe themselves for being born white. The reason for that will become clear.

The 'Anti-Semitism' fraud

Zionists support the Jewish homeland in the land of Palestine which has been the Sabbatian-Rothschild goal for so long, but not for the benefit of Jews. Sabbatians and their global Anti-Semitism Industry have skewed public and political opinion to equate opposing the violent extremes of Zionism to be a blanket attack and condemnation of all Jewish people. Sabbatians and their global Anti-Semitism Industry have skewed public and political opinion to equate opposing the violent extremes of Zionism to be a blanket attack and condemnation of all Jewish people. This is nothing more than a Sabbatian protection racket to stop legitimate investigation and exposure of their agendas and activities. The official definition of 'anti-Semitism' has more recently been expanded to include criticism of Zionism – a *political movement* – and this was done to further stop exposure of Sabbatian infiltrators who created Zionism as we know it today in the 19th century. Renegade Minds will talk about these subjects when they know the shit that will come their way. People must decide if they want to know the truth or just cower in the corner in fear of what others will say. Sabbatians have been trying to label me as 'anti-Semitic' since the 1990s as I have uncovered more and more about their background and agendas. Useless, gutless, fraudulent 'journalists' then just repeat the smears without question and on the day I was writing this section a pair of unquestioning repeaters called Ben Quinn and Archie Bland (how appropriate) outright called me an 'anti-Semite' in the establishment propaganda sheet, the London *Guardian*, with no supporting evidence. The

Sabbatian Anti-Semitism Industry said so and who are they to question that? They wouldn't dare. Ironically 'Semitic' refers to a group of languages in the Middle East that are almost entirely Arabic. 'Anti-Semitism' becomes 'anti-Arab' which if the consequences of this misunderstanding were not so grave would be hilarious. Don't bother telling Quinn and Bland. I don't want to confuse them, bless 'em. One reason I am dubbed 'anti-Semitic' is that I wrote in the 1990s that Jewish operatives (Sabbatians) were heavily involved in the Russian Revolution when Sabbatians overthrew the Romanov dynasty. This apparently made me 'anti-Semitic'. Oh, really? Here is a section from *The Trigger*:

British journalist Robert Wilton confirmed these themes in his 1920 book *The Last Days of the Romanovs* when he studied official documents from the Russian government to identify the members of the Bolshevik ruling elite between 1917 and 1919. The Central Committee included 41 Jews among 62 members; the Council of the People's Commissars had 17 Jews out of 22 members; and 458 of the 556 most important Bolshevik positions between 1918 and 1919 were occupied by Jewish people. Only 17 were Russian. Then there were the 23 Jews among the 36 members of the vicious Cheka Soviet secret police established in 1917 who would soon appear all across the country.

Professor Robert Service of Oxford University, an expert on 20th century Russian history, found evidence that ['Jewish'] Leon Trotsky had sought to make sure that Jews were enrolled in the Red Army and were disproportionately represented in the Soviet civil bureaucracy that included the Cheka which performed mass arrests, imprisonment and executions of 'enemies of the people'. A US State Department Decimal File (861.00/5339) dated November 13th, 1918, names [Rothschild banking agent in America] Jacob Schiff and a list of ultra-Zionists as funders of the Russian Revolution leading to claims of a 'Jewish plot', but the key point missed by all is they were not 'Jews' – they were Sabbatian-Frankists.

Britain's Winston Churchill made the same error by mistake or otherwise. He wrote in a 1920 edition of the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* that those behind the Russian revolution were part of a 'worldwide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence, and impossible equality' (see 'Woke' today because that has been created by the same network). Churchill said there was no need to exaggerate the part played in the creation of Bolshevism and in the actual bringing about of the Russian

Revolution 'by these international and for the most part atheistical Jews' ['atheistical Jews' = Sabbatians]. Churchill said it is certainly a very great one and probably outweighs all others: 'With the notable exception of Lenin, the majority of the leading figures are Jews.' He went on to describe, knowingly or not, the Sabbatian modus operandi of placing puppet leaders nominally in power while they control from the background:

Moreover, the principal inspiration and driving power comes from the Jewish leaders. Thus Tchitcherin, a pure Russian, is eclipsed by his nominal subordinate, Litvinoff, and the influence of Russians like Bukharin or Lunacharski cannot be compared with the power of Trotsky, or of Zinovieff, the Dictator of the Red Citadel (Petrograd), or of Krassin or Radek – all Jews. In the Soviet institutions the predominance of Jews is even more astonishing. And the prominent, if not indeed the principal, part in the system of terrorism applied by the Extraordinary Commissions for Combatting Counter-Revolution has been taken by Jews, and in some notable cases by Jewesses.

What I said about seriously disproportionate involvement in the Russian Revolution by Jewish 'revolutionaries' (Sabbatians) is provable fact, but truth is no defence against the Sabbatian Anti-Semitism Industry, its repeater parrots like Quinn and Bland, and the now breathtaking network of so-called 'Woke' 'anti-hate' groups with interlocking leaderships and funding which have the role of discrediting and silencing anyone who gets too close to exposing the Sabbatians. We have seen 'truth is no defence' confirmed in legal judgements with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission in Canada decreeing this: 'Truthful statements can be presented in a manner that would meet the definition of hate speech, and not all truthful statements must be free from restriction.' Most 'anti-hate' activists, who are themselves consumed by hatred, are too stupid and ignorant of the world to know how they are being used. They are far too far up their own virtue-signalling arses and it's far too dark for them to see anything.

The 'revolution' game

The background and methods of the 'Russian' Revolution are straight from the Sabbatian playbook seen in the French Revolution

and endless others around the world that appear to start as a revolution of the people against tyrannical rule and end up with a regime change to more tyrannical rule overtly or covertly. Wars, terror attacks and regime overthrows follow the Sabbatian cult through history with its agents creating them as Problem-Reaction-Solutions to remove opposition on the road to world domination. Sabbatian dots connect the Rothschilds with the Illuminati, Jacobins of the French Revolution, the 'Bund' or League of the Just, the International Communist Party, Communist League and the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that would lead to the Rothschild-funded Russian Revolution. The sequence comes under the heading of 'creative destruction' when you advance to your global goal by continually destroying the status quo to install a new status quo which you then also destroy. The two world wars come to mind. With each new status quo you move closer to your planned outcome. Wars and mass murder are to Sabbatians a collective blood sacrifice ritual. They are obsessed with death for many reasons and one is that death is an inversion of life. Satanists and Sabbatians are obsessed with death and often target churches and churchyards for their rituals. Inversion-obsessed Sabbatians explain the use of inverted symbolism including the *inverted* pentagram and *inverted* cross. The inversion of the cross has been related to targeting Christianity, but the cross was a religious symbol long before Christianity and its inversion is a statement about the Sabbatian mentality and goals more than any single religion.

Sabbatians operating in Germany were behind the rise of the occult-obsessed Nazis and the subsequent Jewish exodus from Germany and Europe to Palestine and the United States after World War Two. The Rothschild dynasty was at the forefront of this both as political manipulators and by funding the operation. Why would Sabbatians help to orchestrate the horrors inflicted on Jews by the Nazis and by Stalin after they organised the Russian Revolution? Sabbatians hate Jews and their religion, that's why. They pose as Jews and secure positions of control within Jewish society and play the 'anti-Semitism' card to protect themselves from exposure

through a global network of organisations answering to the Sabbatian-created-and-controlled globe-spanning intelligence network that involves a stunning web of military-intelligence operatives and operations for a tiny country of just nine million. Among them are Jewish assets who are not Sabbatians but have been convinced by them that what they are doing is for the good of Israel and the Jewish community to protect them from what they have been programmed since childhood to believe is a Jew-hating hostile world. The Jewish community is just a highly convenient cover to hide the true nature of Sabbatians. Anyone getting close to exposing their game is accused by Sabbatian place-people and gofers of 'anti-Semitism' and claiming that all Jews are part of a plot to take over the world. I am not saying that. I am saying that Sabbatians – the *real* Jew-haters – have infiltrated the Jewish community to use them both as a cover and an 'anti-Semitic' defence against exposure. Thus we have the Anti-Semitism Industry targeted researchers in this way and most Jewish people think this is justified and genuine. They don't know that their 'Jewish' leaders and institutions of state, intelligence and military are not controlled by Jews at all, but cultists and stooges of Sabbatian-Frankism. I once added my name to a pro-Jewish freedom petition online and the next time I looked my name was gone and text had been added to the petition blurb to attack me as an 'anti-Semite' such is the scale of perceptual programming.

Moving on America

I tell the story in *The Trigger* and a chapter called 'Atlantic Crossing' how particularly after Israel was established the Sabbatians moved in on the United States and eventually grasped control of government administration, the political system via both Democrats and Republicans, the intelligence community like the CIA and National Security Agency (NSA), the Pentagon and mass media. Through this seriously compartmentalised network Sabbatians and their operatives in Mossad, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and US agencies pulled off 9/11 and blamed it on 19 'Al-Qaeda hijackers' dominated by men from, or connected to, Sabbatian-ruled Saudi

Arabia. The '19' were not even on the planes let alone flew those big passenger jets into buildings while being largely incompetent at piloting one-engine light aircraft. 'Hijacker' Hani Hanjour who is said to have flown American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon with a turn and manoeuvre most professional pilots said they would have struggled to do was banned from renting a small plane by instructors at the Freeway Airport in Bowie, Maryland, just *six weeks* earlier on the grounds that he was an incompetent pilot. The Jewish population of the world is just 0.2 percent with even that almost entirely concentrated in Israel (75 percent Jewish) and the United States (around two percent). This two percent and globally 0.2 percent refers to *Jewish* people and not Sabbatian interlopers who are a fraction of that fraction. What a sobering thought when you think of the fantastic influence on world affairs of tiny Israel and that the Project for the New America Century (PNAC) which laid out the blueprint in September, 2000, for America's war on terror and regime change wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria was founded and dominated by Sabbatians known as 'Neocons'. The document conceded that this plan would not be supported politically or publicly without a major attack on American soil and a Problem-Reaction-Solution excuse to send troops to war across the Middle East. Sabbatian Neocons said:

... [The] process of transformation ... [war and regime change] ... is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalysing event – like a new Pearl Harbor.

Four months later many of those who produced that document came to power with their inane puppet George Bush from the long-time Sabbatian Bush family. They included Sabbatian Dick Cheney who was officially vice-president, but really de-facto president for the entirety of the 'Bush' government. Nine months after the 'Bush' inauguration came what Bush called at the time 'the Pearl Harbor of the 21st century' and with typical Sabbatian timing and symbolism 2001 was the 60th anniversary of the attack in 1941 by the Japanese Air Force on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which allowed President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to take the United States into a Sabbatian-

instigated Second World War that he said in his election campaign that he never would. The evidence is overwhelming that Roosevelt and his military and intelligence networks knew the attack was coming and did nothing to stop it, but they did make sure that America's most essential naval ships were not in Hawaii at the time. Three thousand Americans died in the Pearl Harbor attacks as they did on September 11th. By the 9/11 year of 2001 Sabbatians had widely infiltrated the US government, military and intelligence operations and used their compartmentalised assets to pull off the 'Al-Qaeda' attacks. If you read *The Trigger* it will blow your mind to see the utterly staggering concentration of 'Jewish' operatives (Sabbatian infiltrators) in essential positions of political, security, legal, law enforcement, financial and business power before, during, and after the attacks to make them happen, carry them out, and then cover their tracks – and I do mean *staggering* when you think of that 0.2 percent of the world population and two percent of Americans which are Jewish while Sabbatian infiltrators are a fraction of that. A central foundation of the 9/11 conspiracy was the hijacking of government, military, Air Force and intelligence computer systems in real time through 'back-door' access made possible by Israeli (Sabbatian) 'cyber security' software. Sabbatian-controlled Israel is on the way to rivalling Silicon Valley for domination of cyberspace and is becoming the dominant force in cyber-security which gives them access to entire computer systems and their passcodes across the world. Then add to this that Zionists head (officially) Silicon Valley giants like Google (Larry Page and Sergey Brin), Google-owned YouTube (Susan Wojcicki), Facebook (Mark Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg), and Apple (Chairman Arthur D. Levinson), and that ultra-Zionist hedge fund billionaire Paul Singer has a \$1 billion stake in Twitter which is only nominally headed by 'CEO' pothead Jack Dorsey. As cable news host Tucker Carlson said of Dorsey: 'There used to be debate in the medical community whether dropping a ton of acid had permanent effects and I think that debate has now ended.' Carlson made the comment after Dorsey told a hearing on Capitol Hill (if you cut through his bullshit) that he

believed in free speech so long as he got to decide what you can hear and see. These 'big names' of Silicon Valley are only front men and women for the Global Cult, not least the Sabbatians, who are the true controllers of these corporations. Does anyone still wonder why these same people and companies have been ferociously censoring and banning people (like me) for exposing any aspect of the Cult agenda and especially the truth about the 'Covid' hoax which Sabbatians have orchestrated?

The Jeffrey Epstein paedophile ring was a Sabbatian operation. He was officially 'Jewish' but he was a Sabbatian and women abused by the ring have told me about the high number of 'Jewish' people involved. The Epstein horror has Sabbatian written all over it and matches perfectly their modus operandi and obsession with sex and ritual. Epstein was running a Sabbatian blackmail ring in which famous people with political and other influence were provided with young girls for sex while everything was being filmed and recorded on hidden cameras and microphones at his New York house, Caribbean island and other properties. Epstein survivors have described this surveillance system to me and some have gone public. Once the famous politician or other figure knew he or she was on video they tended to do whatever they were told. Here we go again ...when you've got them by the balls their hearts and minds will follow. Sabbatians use this blackmail technique on a wide scale across the world to entrap politicians and others they need to act as demanded. Epstein's private plane, the infamous 'Lolita Express', had many well-known passengers including Bill Clinton while Bill Gates has flown on an Epstein plane and met with him four years after Epstein had been jailed for paedophilia. They subsequently met many times at Epstein's home in New York according to a witness who was there. Epstein's infamous side-kick was Ghislaine Maxwell, daughter of Mossad agent and ultra-Zionist mega-crooked British businessman, Bob Maxwell, who at one time owned the *Daily Mirror* newspaper. Maxwell was murdered at sea on his boat in 1991 by Sabbatian-controlled Mossad when he became a liability with his

business empire collapsing as a former Mossad operative has confirmed (see *The Trigger*).

Money, money, money, funny money ...

Before I come to the Sabbatian connection with the last three US presidents I will lay out the crucial importance to Sabbatians of controlling banking and finance. Sabbatian Mayer Amschel Rothschild set out to dominate this arena in his family's quest for total global control. What is freedom? It is, in effect, choice. The more choices you have the freer you are and the fewer your choices the more you are enslaved. In the global structure created over centuries by Sabbatians the biggest decider and restrictor of choice is ... money. Across the world if you ask people what they would like to do with their lives and why they are not doing that they will reply 'I don't have the money'. This is the idea. A global elite of multi-billionaires are described as 'greedy' and that is true on one level; but control of money – who has it and who doesn't – is not primarily about greed. It's about control. Sabbatians have seized ever more control of finance and sucked the wealth of the world out of the hands of the population. We talk now, after all, about the 'One-percent' and even then the wealthiest are a lot fewer even than that. This has been made possible by a money scam so outrageous and so vast it could rightly be called the scam of scams founded on creating 'money' out of nothing and 'loaning' that with interest to the population. Money out of nothing is called 'credit'. Sabbatians have asserted control over governments and banking ever more completely through the centuries and secured financial laws that allow banks to lend hugely more than they have on deposit in a confidence trick known as fractional reserve lending. Imagine if you could lend money that doesn't exist and charge the recipient interest for doing so. You would end up in jail. Bankers by contrast end up in mansions, private jets, Malibu and Monaco.

Banks are only required to keep a fraction of their deposits and wealth in their vaults and they are allowed to lend 'money' they don't have called 'credit'. Go into a bank for a loan and if you succeed

the banker will not move any real wealth into your account. They will type into your account the amount of the agreed 'loan' – say £100,000. This is not wealth that really exists; it is non-existent, fresh-air, created-out-of-nothing 'credit' which has never, does not, and will never exist except in theory. Credit is backed by nothing except wind and only has buying power because people think that it has buying power and accept it in return for property, goods and services. I have described this situation as like those cartoon characters you see chasing each other and when they run over the edge of a cliff they keep running forward on fresh air until one of them looks down, realises what's happened, and they all crash into the ravine. The whole foundation of the Sabbatian financial system is to stop people looking down except for periodic moments when they want to crash the system (as in 2008 and 2020 ongoing) and reap the rewards from all the property, businesses and wealth their borrowers had signed over as 'collateral' in return for a 'loan' of fresh air. Most people think that money is somehow created by governments when it comes into existence from the start as a debt through banks 'lending' illusory money called credit. Yes, the very currency of exchange is a *debt* from day one issued as an interest-bearing loan. Why don't governments create money interest-free and lend it to their people interest-free? Governments are controlled by Sabbatians and the financial system is controlled by Sabbatians for whom interest-free money would be a nightmare come true. Sabbatians underpin their financial domination through their global network of central banks, including the privately-owned US Federal Reserve and Britain's Bank of England, and this is orchestrated by a privately-owned central bank coordination body called the Bank for International Settlements in Basle, Switzerland, created by the usual suspects including the Rockefellers and Rothschilds. Central bank chiefs don't answer to governments or the people. They answer to the Bank for International Settlements or, in other words, the Global Cult which is dominated today by Sabbatians.

Built-in disaster

There are so many constituent scams within the overall banking scam. When you take out a loan of thin-air credit only the amount of that loan is theoretically brought into circulation to add to the amount in circulation; but you are paying back the principle plus interest. The additional interest is not created and this means that with every 'loan' there is a shortfall in the money in circulation between what is borrowed and what has to be paid back. There is never even close to enough money in circulation to repay all outstanding public and private debt including interest. Coldly weaved in the very fabric of the system is the certainty that some will lose their homes, businesses and possessions to the banking 'lender'. This is less obvious in times of 'boom' when the amount of money in circulation (and the debt) is expanding through more people wanting and getting loans. When a downturn comes and the money supply contracts it becomes painfully obvious that there is not enough money to service all debt and interest. This is less obvious in times of 'boom' when the amount of money in circulation (and the debt) is expanding through more people wanting and getting loans. When a downturn comes and the money supply contracts and it becomes painfully obvious – as in 2008 and currently – that there is not enough money to service all debt and interest. Sabbatian banksters have been leading the human population through a calculated series of booms (more debt incurred) and busts (when the debt can't be repaid and the banks get the debtor's tangible wealth in exchange for non-existent 'credit'). With each 'bust' Sabbatian bankers have absorbed more of the world's tangible wealth and we end up with the One-percent. Governments are in bankruptcy levels of debt to the same system and are therefore owned by a system they do not control. The Federal Reserve, 'America's central bank', is privately-owned and American presidents only nominally appoint its chairman or woman to maintain the illusion that it's an arm of government. It's not. The 'Fed' is a cartel of private banks which handed billions to its associates and friends after the crash of 2008 and has been Sabbatian-controlled since it was manipulated into being in 1913 through the covert trickery of Rothschild banking agents Jacob Schiff and Paul

Warburg, and the Sabbatian Rockefeller family. Somehow from a Jewish population of two-percent and globally 0.2 percent (Sabbatian interlopers remember are far smaller) ultra-Zionists headed the Federal Reserve for 31 years between 1987 and 2018 in the form of Alan Greenspan, Bernard Bernanke and Janet Yellen (now Biden's Treasury Secretary) with Yellen's deputy chairman a Israeli-American dual citizen and ultra-Zionist Stanley Fischer, a former governor of the Bank of Israel. Ultra-Zionist Fed chiefs spanned the presidencies of Ronald Reagan ('Republican'), Father George Bush ('Republican'), Bill Clinton ('Democrat'), Boy George Bush ('Republican') and Barack Obama ('Democrat'). We should really add the pre-Greenspan chairman, Paul Adolph Volcker, 'appointed' by Jimmy Carter ('Democrat') who ran the Fed between 1979 and 1987 during the Carter and Reagan administrations before Greenspan took over. Volcker was a long-time associate and business partner of the Rothschilds. No matter what the 'party' officially in power the United States economy was directed by the same force. Here are members of the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations and see if you can make out a common theme.

Barack Obama ('Democrat')

Ultra-Zionists Robert Rubin, Larry Summers, and Timothy Geithner ran the US Treasury in the Clinton administration and two of them reappeared with Obama. Ultra-Zionist Fed chairman Alan Greenspan had manipulated the crash of 2008 through deregulation and jumped ship just before the disaster to make way for ultra-Zionist Bernard Bernanke to hand out trillions to Sabbatian 'too big to fail' banks and businesses, including the ubiquitous ultra-Zionist Goldman Sachs which has an ongoing staff revolving door operation between itself and major financial positions in government worldwide. Obama inherited the fallout of the crash when he took office in January, 2009, and fortunately he had the support of his ultra-Zionist White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel, son of a terrorist who helped to bomb Israel into being in 1948, and his ultra-Zionist senior adviser David Axelrod, chief strategist in Obama's two

successful presidential campaigns. Emmanuel, later mayor of Chicago and former senior fundraiser and strategist for Bill Clinton, is an example of the Sabbatian policy after Israel was established of migrating insider families to America so their children would be born American citizens. 'Obama' chose this financial team throughout his administration to respond to the Sabbatian-instigated crisis:

Timothy Geithner (ultra-Zionist) Treasury Secretary; Jacob J. Lew, Treasury Secretary; Larry Summers (ultra-Zionist), director of the White House National Economic Council; Paul Adolph Volcker (Rothschild business partner), chairman of the Economic Recovery Advisory Board; Peter Orszag (ultra-Zionist), director of the Office of Management and Budget overseeing all government spending; Penny Pritzker (ultra-Zionist), Commerce Secretary; Jared Bernstein (ultra-Zionist), chief economist and economic policy adviser to Vice President Joe Biden; Mary Schapiro (ultra-Zionist), chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC); Gary Gensler (ultra-Zionist), chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC); Sheila Bair (ultra-Zionist), chair of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC); Karen Mills (ultra-Zionist), head of the Small Business Administration (SBA); Kenneth Feinberg (ultra-Zionist), Special Master for Executive [bail-out] Compensation. Feinberg would be appointed to oversee compensation (with strings) to 9/11 victims and families in a campaign to stop them having their day in court to question the official story. At the same time ultra-Zionist Bernard Bernanke was chairman of the Federal Reserve and these are only some of the ultra-Zionists with allegiance to Sabbatian-controlled Israel in the Obama government. Obama's biggest corporate donor was ultra-Zionist Goldman Sachs which had employed many in his administration.

Donald Trump ('Republican')

Trump claimed to be an outsider (he wasn't) who had come to 'drain the swamp'. He embarked on this goal by immediately appointing ultra-Zionist Steve Mnuchin, a Goldman Sachs employee for 17

years, as his Treasury Secretary. Others included Gary Cohn (ultra-Zionist), chief operating officer of Goldman Sachs, his first Director of the National Economic Council and chief economic adviser, who was later replaced by Larry Kudlow (ultra-Zionist). Trump's senior adviser throughout his four years in the White House was his sinister son-in-law Jared Kushner, a life-long friend of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Kushner is the son of a convicted crook who was pardoned by Trump in his last days in office. Other ultra-Zionists in the Trump administration included: Stephen Miller, Senior Policy Adviser; Avrahm Berkowitz, Deputy Adviser to Trump and his Senior Adviser Jared Kushner; Ivanka Trump, Adviser to the President, who converted to Judaism when she married Jared Kushner; David Friedman, Trump lawyer and Ambassador to Israel; Jason Greenblatt, Trump Organization executive vice president and chief legal officer, who was made Special Representative for International Negotiations and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Rod Rosenstein, Deputy Attorney General; Elliot Abrams, Special Representative for Venezuela, then Iran; John Eisenberg, National Security Council Legal Adviser and Deputy Council to the President for National Security Affairs; Anne Neuberger, Deputy National Manager, National Security Agency; Ezra Cohen-Watnick, Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; Elan Carr, Special Envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism; Len Khodorkovsky, Deputy Special Envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism; Reed Cordish, Assistant to the President, Intragovernmental and Technology Initiatives. Trump Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, both Christian Zionists, were also vehement supporters of Israel and its goals and ambitions.

Donald 'free-speech believer' Trump pardoned a number of financial and violent criminals while ignoring calls to pardon Julian Assange and Edward Snowden whose crimes are revealing highly relevant information about government manipulation and corruption and the widespread illegal surveillance of the American people by US 'security' agencies. It's so good to know that Trump is on the side of freedom and justice and not mega-criminals with

allegiance to Sabbatian-controlled Israel. These included a pardon for Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard who was jailed for life in 1987 under the Espionage Act. Aviem Sella, the Mossad agent who recruited Pollard, was also pardoned by Trump while Assange sat in jail and Snowden remained in exile in Russia. Sella had 'fled' (was helped to escape) to Israel in 1987 and was never extradited despite being charged under the Espionage Act. A Trump White House statement said that Sella's clemency had been 'supported by Benjamin Netanyahu, Ron Dermer, Israel's US Ambassador, David Friedman, US Ambassador to Israel and Miriam Adelson, wife of leading Trump donor Sheldon Adelson who died shortly before. Other friends of Jared Kushner were pardoned along with Sholom Weiss who was believed to be serving the longest-ever white-collar prison sentence of more than 800 years in 2000. The sentence was commuted of Ponzi-schemer Eliyahu Weinstein who defrauded Jews and others out of \$200 million. I did mention that Assange and Snowden were ignored, right? Trump gave Sabbatians almost everything they asked for in military and political support, moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem with its critical symbolic and literal implications for Palestinian statehood, and the 'deal of the Century' designed by Jared Kushner and David Friedman which gave the Sabbatian Israeli government the green light to substantially expand its already widespread program of building illegal Jewish-only settlements in the occupied land of the West Bank. This made a two-state 'solution' impossible by seizing all the land of a potential Palestinian homeland and that had been the plan since 1948 and then 1967 when the Arab-controlled Gaza Strip, West Bank, Sinai Peninsula and Syrian Golan Heights were occupied by Israel. All the talks about talks and road maps and delays have been buying time until the West Bank was physically occupied by Israeli real estate. Trump would have to be a monumentally ill-informed idiot not to see that this was the plan he was helping to complete. The Trump administration was in so many ways the Kushner administration which means the Netanyahu administration which means the Sabbatian administration. I understand why many opposing Cult fascism in all its forms gravitated to Trump, but he

was a crucial part of the Sabbatian plan and I will deal with this in the next chapter.

Joe Biden ('Democrat')

A barely cognitive Joe Biden took over the presidency in January, 2021, along with his fellow empty shell, Vice-President Kamala Harris, as the latest Sabbatian gofers to enter the White House. Names on the door may have changed and the 'party' – the force behind them remained the same as Zionists were appointed to a stream of pivotal areas relating to Sabbatian plans and policy. They included: Janet Yellen, Treasury Secretary, former head of the Federal Reserve, and still another ultra-Zionist running the US Treasury after Mnuchin (Trump), Lew and Geithner (Obama), and Summers and Rubin (Clinton); Anthony Blinken, Secretary of State; Wendy Sherman, Deputy Secretary of State (so that's 'Biden's' Sabbatian foreign policy sorted); Jeff Zients, White House coronavirus coordinator; Rochelle Walensky, head of the Centers for Disease Control; Rachel Levine, transgender deputy health secretary (that's 'Covid' hoax policy under control); Merrick Garland, Attorney General; Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security; Cass Sunstein, Homeland Security with responsibility for new immigration laws; Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence; Anne Neuberger, National Security Agency cybersecurity director (note, cybersecurity); David Cohen, CIA Deputy Director; Ronald Klain, Biden's Chief of Staff (see Rahm Emanuel); Eric Lander, a 'leading geneticist', Office of Science and Technology Policy director (see Smart Grid, synthetic biology agenda); Jessica Rosenworcel, acting head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which controls Smart Grid technology policy and electromagnetic communication systems including 5G. How can it be that so many pivotal positions are held by two-percent of the American population and 0.2 percent of the world population administration after administration no matter who is the president and what is the party? It's a coincidence? Of course it's not and this is why Sabbatians have built their colossal global web of interlocking 'anti-

hate' hate groups to condemn anyone who asks these glaring questions as an 'anti-Semite'. The way that Jewish people horrifically abused in Sabbatian-backed Nazi Germany are exploited to this end is stomach-turning and disgusting beyond words.

Political fusion

Sabbatian manipulation has reversed the roles of Republicans and Democrats and the same has happened in Britain with the Conservative and Labour Parties. Republicans and Conservatives were always labelled the 'right' and Democrats and Labour the 'left', but look at the policy positions now and the Democrat-Labour 'left' has moved further to the 'right' than Republicans and Conservatives under the banner of 'Woke', the Cult-created far-right tyranny. Where once the Democrat-Labour 'left' defended free speech and human rights they now seek to delete them and as I said earlier despite the 'Covid' fascism of the Jackboot Johnson Conservative government in the UK the Labour Party of leader Keir Starmer demanded even more extreme measures. The Labour Party has been very publicly absorbed by Sabbatians after a political and media onslaught against the previous leader, the weak and inept Jeremy Corbyn, over made-up allegations of 'anti-Semitism' both by him and his party. The plan was clear with this 'anti-Semite' propaganda and what was required in response was a swift and decisive 'fuck off' from Corbyn and a statement to expose the Anti-Semitism Industry (Sabbatian) attempt to silence Labour criticism of the Israeli government (Sabbatians) and purge the party of all dissent against the extremes of ultra-Zionism (Sabbatians). Instead Corbyn and his party fell to their knees and appeased the abusers which, by definition, is impossible. Appeasing one demand leads only to a new demand to be appeased until takeover is complete. Like I say – 'fuck off' would have been a much more effective policy and I have used it myself with great effect over the years when Sabbatians are on my case which is most of the time. I consider that fact a great compliment, by the way. The outcome of the Labour Party capitulation is that we now have a Sabbatian-controlled

Conservative Party 'opposed' by a Sabbatian-controlled Labour Party in a one-party Sabbatian state that hurtles towards the extremes of tyranny (the Sabbatian cult agenda). In America the situation is the same. Labour's Keir Starmer spends his days on his knees with his tongue out pointing to Tel Aviv, or I guess now Jerusalem, while Boris Johnson has an 'anti-Semitism czar' in the form of former Labour MP John Mann who keeps Starmer company on his prayer mat.

Sabbatian influence can be seen in Jewish members of the Labour Party who have been ejected for criticism of Israel including those from families that suffered in Nazi Germany. Sabbatians despise real Jewish people and target them even more harshly because it is so much more difficult to dub them 'anti-Semitic' although in their desperation they do try.

CHAPTER THREE

The Pushbacker sting

*Until you realize how easy it is for your mind to be manipulated, you
remain the puppet of someone else's game*

Evita Ochel

I will use the presidencies of Trump and Biden to show how the manipulation of the one-party state plays out behind the illusion of political choice across the world. No two presidencies could – on the face of it – be more different and apparently at odds in terms of direction and policy.

A Renegade Mind sees beyond the obvious and focuses on outcomes and consequences and not image, words and waffle. The Cult embarked on a campaign to divide America between those who blindly support its agenda (the mentality known as 'Woke') and those who are pushing back on where the Cult and its Sabbatians want to go. This presents infinite possibilities for dividing and ruling the population by setting them at war with each other and allows a perceptual ring fence of demonisation to encircle the Pushbackers in a modern version of the Little Big Horn in 1876 when American cavalry led by Lieutenant Colonel George Custer were drawn into a trap, surrounded and killed by Native American tribes defending their land of thousands of years from being seized by the government. In this modern version the roles are reversed and it's those defending themselves from the Sabbatian government who are surrounded and the government that's seeking to destroy them. This trap was set years ago and to explain how we must return to 2016

and the emergence of Donald Trump as a candidate to be President of the United States. He set out to overcome the best part of 20 other candidates in the Republican Party before and during the primaries and was not considered by many in those early stages to have a prayer of living in the White House. The Republican Party was said to have great reservations about Trump and yet somehow he won the nomination. When you know how American politics works – politics in general – there is no way that Trump could have become the party's candidate unless the Sabbatian-controlled 'Neocons' that run the Republican Party wanted that to happen. We saw the proof in emails and documents made public by WikiLeaks that the Democratic Party hierarchy, or Democons, systematically undermined the campaign of Bernie Sanders to make sure that Sabbatian gofer Hillary Clinton won the nomination to be their presidential candidate. If the Democons could do that then the Neocons in the Republican Party could have derailed Trump in the same way. But they didn't and at that stage I began to conclude that Trump could well be the one chosen to be president. If that was the case the 'why' was pretty clear to see – the goal of dividing America between Cult agenda-supporting Wokers and Pushbackers who gravitated to Trump because he was telling them what they wanted to hear. His constituency of support had been increasingly ignored and voiceless for decades and profoundly through the eight years of Sabbatian puppet Barack Obama. Now here was someone speaking their language of pulling back from the incessant globalisation of political and economic power, the exporting of American jobs to China and elsewhere by 'American' (Sabbatian) corporations, the deletion of free speech, and the mass immigration policies that had further devastated job opportunities for the urban working class of all races and the once American heartlands of the Midwest.

Beware the forked tongue

Those people collectively sighed with relief that at last a political leader was apparently on their side, but another trait of the Renegade Mind is that you look even harder at people telling you

what you want to hear than those who are telling you otherwise. Obviously as I said earlier people wish what they want to hear to be true and genuine and they are much more likely to believe that than someone saying what they don't want to hear and don't want to be true. Sales people are taught to be skilled in eliciting by calculated questioning what their customers want to hear and repeating that back to them as their own opinion to get their targets to like and trust them. Assets of the Cult are also sales people in the sense of selling perception. To read Cult manipulation you have to play the long and expanded game and not fall for the Vaudeville show of party politics. Both American parties are vehicles for the Cult and they exploit them in different ways depending on what the agenda requires at that moment. Trump and the Republicans were used to be the focus of dividing America and isolating Pushbackers to open the way for a Biden presidency to become the most extreme in American history by advancing the full-blown Woke (Cult) agenda with the aim of destroying and silencing Pushbackers now labelled Nazi Trump supporters and white supremacists.

Sabbatians wanted Trump in office for the reasons described by ultra-Zionist Saul Alinsky (1909-1972) who was promoting the Woke philosophy through 'community organising' long before anyone had heard of it. In those days it still went by its traditional name of Marxism. The reason for the manipulated Trump phenomenon was laid out in Alinsky's 1971 book, *Rules for Radicals*, which was his blueprint for overthrowing democratic and other regimes and replacing them with Sabbatian Marxism. Not surprisingly his to-do list was evident in the Sabbatian French and Russian 'Revolutions' and that in China which will become very relevant in the next chapter about the 'Covid' hoax. Among Alinsky's followers have been the deeply corrupt Barack Obama, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton who described him as a 'hero'. All three are Sabbatian stooges with Pelosi personifying the arrogant corrupt idiocy that so widely fronts up for the Cult inner core. Predictably as a Sabbatian advocate of the 'light-bringer' Alinsky features Lucifer on the dedication page of his book as the original radical who gained

his own kingdom ('Earth' as we shall see). One of Alinsky's golden radical rules was to pick an individual and focus all attention, hatred and blame on them and not to target faceless bureaucracies and corporations. *Rules for Radicals* is really a Sabbatian handbook with its contents repeatedly employed all over the world for centuries and why wouldn't Sabbatians bring to power their designer-villain to be used as the individual on which all attention, hatred and blame was bestowed? This is what they did and the only question for me is how much Trump knew that and how much he was manipulated. A bit of both, I suspect. This was Alinsky's Trump technique from a man who died in 1972. The technique has spanned history:

Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it. Don't try to attack abstract corporations or bureaucracies. Identify a responsible individual. Ignore attempts to shift or spread the blame.

From the moment Trump came to illusory power everything was about him. It wasn't about Republican policy or opinion, but all about Trump. Everything he did was presented in negative, derogatory and abusive terms by the Sabbatian-dominated media led by Cult operations such as CNN, MSNBC, *The New York Times* and the Jeff Bezos-owned *Washington Post* – 'Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it.' Trump was turned into a demon to be vilified by those who hated him and a demi-god loved by those who worshipped him. This, in turn, had his supporters, too, presented as equally demonic in preparation for the punchline later down the line when Biden was about to take office. It was here's a Trump, there's a Trump, everywhere a Trump, Trump. Virtually every news story or happening was filtered through the lens of 'The Donald'. You loved him or hated him and which one you chose was said to define you as Satan's spawn or a paragon of virtue. Even supporting some Trump policies or statements and not others was enough for an assault on your character. No shades of grey were or are allowed. Everything is black and white (literally and figuratively). A Californian I knew had her head utterly scrambled by her hatred for Trump while telling people they should love each other. She was so totally consumed by

Trump Derangement Syndrome as it became to be known that this glaring contradiction would never have occurred to her. By definition anyone who criticised Trump or praised his opponents was a hero and this lady described Joe Biden as 'a kind, honest gentleman' when he's a provable liar, mega-crook and vicious piece of work to boot. Sabbatians had indeed divided America using Trump as the fall-guy and all along the clock was ticking on the consequences for his supporters.

In hock to his masters

Trump gave Sabbatians via Israel almost everything they wanted in his four years. Ask and you shall receive was the dynamic between himself and Benjamin Netanyahu orchestrated by Trump's ultra-Zionist son-in-law Jared Kushner, his ultra-Zionist Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, and ultra-Zionist 'Israel adviser', Jason Greenblatt. The last two were central to the running and protecting from collapse of his business empire, the Trump Organisation, and colossal business failures made him forever beholding to Sabbatian networks that bailed him out. By the start of the 1990s Trump owed \$4 billion to banks that he couldn't pay and almost \$1 billion of that was down to him personally and not his companies. This mega-disaster was the result of building two new casinos in Atlantic City and buying the enormous Taj Mahal operation which led to crippling debt payments. He had borrowed fantastic sums from 72 banks with major Sabbatian connections and although the scale of debt should have had him living in a tent alongside the highway they never foreclosed. A plan was devised to lift Trump from the mire by BT Securities Corporation and Rothschild Inc. and the case was handled by Wilber Ross who had worked for the Rothschilds for 27 years. Ross would be named US Commerce Secretary after Trump's election. Another crucial figure in saving Trump was ultra-Zionist 'investor' Carl Icahn who bought the Taj Mahal casino. Icahn was made special economic adviser on financial regulation in the Trump administration. He didn't stay long but still managed to find time to make a tidy sum of a reported \$31.3 million when he sold his

holdings affected by the price of steel three days before Trump imposed a 235 percent tariff on steel imports. What amazing bits of luck these people have. Trump and Sabbatian operatives have long had a close association and his mentor and legal adviser from the early 1970s until 1986 was the dark and genetically corrupt ultra-Zionist Roy Cohn who was chief counsel to Senator Joseph McCarthy's 'communist' witch-hunt in the 1950s. *Esquire* magazine published an article about Cohn with the headline 'Don't mess with Roy Cohn'. He was described as the most feared lawyer in New York and 'a ruthless master of dirty tricks ... [with] ... more than one Mafia Don on speed dial'. Cohn's influence, contacts, support and protection made Trump a front man for Sabbatians in New York with their connections to one of Cohn's many criminal employers, the 'Russian' Sabbatian Mafia. Israel-centric media mogul Rupert Murdoch was introduced to Trump by Cohn and they started a long friendship. Cohn died in 1986 weeks after being disbarred for unethical conduct by the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court. The wheels of justice do indeed run slow given the length of Cohn's crooked career.

QAnon-sense

We are asked to believe that Donald Trump with his fundamental connections to Sabbatian networks and operatives has been leading the fight to stop the Sabbatian agenda for the fascistic control of America and the world. Sure he has. A man entrapped during his years in the White House by Sabbatian operatives and whose biggest financial donor was casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson who was Sabbatian to his DNA?? Oh, do come on. Trump has been used to divide America and isolate Pushbackers on the Cult agenda under the heading of 'Trump supporters', 'insurrectionists' and 'white supremacists'. The US Intelligence/Mossad Psyop or psychological operation known as QAnon emerged during the Trump years as a central pillar in the Sabbatian campaign to lead Pushbackers into the trap set by those that wished to destroy them. I knew from the start that QAnon was a scam because I had seen the same scenario many

times before over 30 years under different names and I had written about one in particular in the books. 'Not again' was my reaction when QAnon came to the fore. The same script is pulled out every few years and a new name added to the letterhead. The story always takes the same form: 'Insiders' or 'the good guys' in the government-intelligence-military 'Deep State' apparatus were going to instigate mass arrests of the 'bad guys' which would include the Rockefellers, Rothschilds, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, George Soros, etc., etc. Dates are given for when the 'good guys' are going to move in, but the dates pass without incident and new dates are given which pass without incident. The central message to Pushbackers in each case is that they don't have to do anything because there is 'a plan' and it is all going to be sorted by the 'good guys' on the inside. 'Trust the plan' was a QAnon mantra when the only plan was to misdirect Pushbackers into putting their trust in a Psyop they believed to be real. Beware, beware, those who tell you what you want to hear and always check it out. Right up to Biden's inauguration QAnon was still claiming that 'the Storm' was coming and Trump would stay on as president when Biden and his cronies were arrested and jailed. It was never going to happen and of course it didn't, but what did happen as a result provided that punchline to the Sabbatian Trump/QAnon Psyop.

On January 6th, 2021, a very big crowd of Trump supporters gathered in the National Mall in Washington DC down from the Capitol Building to protest at what they believed to be widespread corruption and vote fraud that stopped Trump being re-elected for a second term as president in November, 2020. I say as someone that does not support Trump or Biden that the evidence is clear that major vote-fixing went on to favour Biden, a man with cognitive problems so advanced he can often hardly string a sentence together without reading the words written for him on the Teleprompter. Glaring ballot discrepancies included serious questions about electronic voting machines that make vote rigging a comparative cinch and hundreds of thousands of paper votes that suddenly appeared during already advanced vote counts and virtually all of

them for Biden. Early Trump leads in crucial swing states suddenly began to close and disappear. The pandemic hoax was used as the excuse to issue almost limitless numbers of mail-in ballots with no checks to establish that the recipients were still alive or lived at that address. They were sent to streams of people who had not even asked for them. Private organisations were employed to gather these ballots and who knows what they did with them before they turned up at the counts. The American election system has been manipulated over decades to become a sick joke with more holes than a Swiss cheese for the express purpose of dictating the results. Then there was the criminal manipulation of information by Sabbatian tech giants like Facebook, Twitter and Google-owned YouTube which deleted pro-Trump, anti-Biden accounts and posts while everything in support of Biden was left alone. Sabbatians wanted Biden to win because after the dividing of America it was time for full-on Woke and every aspect of the Cult agenda to be unleashed.

Hunter gatherer

Extreme Silicon Valley bias included blocking information by the *New York Post* exposing a Biden scandal that should have ended his bid for president in the final weeks of the campaign. Hunter Biden, his monumentally corrupt son, is reported to have sent a laptop to be repaired at a local store and failed to return for it. Time passed until the laptop became the property of the store for non-payment of the bill. When the owner saw what was on the hard drive he gave a copy to the FBI who did nothing even though it confirmed widespread corruption in which the Joe Biden family were using his political position, especially when he was vice president to Obama, to make multiple millions in countries around the world and most notably Ukraine and China. Hunter Biden's one-time business partner Tony Bobulinski went public when the story broke in the *New York Post* to confirm the corruption he saw and that Joe Biden not only knew what was going on he also profited from the spoils. Millions were handed over by a Chinese company with close

connections – like all major businesses in China – to the Chinese communist party of President Xi Jinping. Joe Biden even boasted at a meeting of the Cult's World Economic Forum that as vice president he had ordered the government of Ukraine to fire a prosecutor. What he didn't mention was that the same man just happened to be investigating an energy company which was part of Hunter Biden's corrupt portfolio. The company was paying him big bucks for no other reason than the influence his father had. Overnight Biden's presidential campaign should have been over given that he had lied publicly about not knowing what his son was doing. Instead almost the entire Sabbatian-owned mainstream media and Sabbatian-owned Silicon Valley suppressed circulation of the story. This alone went a mighty way to rigging the election of 2020. Cult assets like Mark Zuckerberg at Facebook also spent hundreds of millions to be used in support of Biden and vote 'administration'.

The Cult had used Trump as the focus to divide America and was now desperate to bring in moronic, pliable, corrupt Biden to complete the double-whammy. No way were they going to let little things like the will of the people thwart their plan. Silicon Valley widely censored claims that the election was rigged because it *was* rigged. For the same reason anyone claiming it was rigged was denounced as a 'white supremacist' including the pathetically few Republican politicians willing to say so. Right across the media where the claim was mentioned it was described as a 'false claim' even though these excuses for 'journalists' would have done no research into the subject whatsoever. Trump won seven million more votes than any sitting president had ever achieved while somehow a cognitively-challenged soon to be 78-year-old who was hidden away from the public for most of the campaign managed to win more votes than any presidential candidate in history. It makes no sense. You only had to see election rallies for both candidates to witness the enthusiasm for Trump and the apathy for Biden. Tens of thousands would attend Trump events while Biden was speaking in empty car parks with often only television crews attending and framing their shots to hide the fact that no one was there. It was pathetic to see

footage come to light of Biden standing at a podium making speeches only to TV crews and party fixers while reading the words written for him on massive Teleprompter screens. So, yes, those protestors on January 6th had a point about election rigging, but some were about to walk into a trap laid for them in Washington by the Cult Deep State and its QAnon Psyop. This was the Capitol Hill riot ludicrously dubbed an 'insurrection'.

The spider and the fly

Renegade Minds know there are not two 'sides' in politics, only one side, the Cult, working through all 'sides'. It's a stage show, a puppet show, to direct the perceptions of the population into focusing on diversions like parties and candidates while missing the puppeteers with their hands holding all the strings. The Capitol Hill 'insurrection' brings us back to the Little Big Horn. Having created two distinct opposing groupings – Woke and Pushbackers – the trap was about to be sprung. Pushbackers were to be encircled and isolated by associating them all in the public mind with Trump and then labelling Trump as some sort of Confederate leader. I knew immediately that the Capitol riot was a set-up because of two things. One was how easy the rioters got into the building with virtually no credible resistance and secondly I could see – as with the 'Covid' hoax in the West at the start of 2020 – how the Cult could exploit the situation to move its agenda forward with great speed. My experience of Cult techniques and activities over more than 30 years has showed me that while they do exploit situations they haven't themselves created this never happens with events of fundamental agenda significance. Every time major events giving cultists the excuse to rapidly advance their plan you find they are manipulated into being for the specific reason of providing that excuse – Problem-Reaction-Solution. Only a tiny minority of the huge crowd of Washington protestors sought to gain entry to the Capitol by smashing windows and breaching doors. That didn't matter. The whole crowd and all Pushbackers, even if they did not support Trump, were going to be lumped together as dangerous

insurrectionists and conspiracy theorists. The latter term came into widespread use through a CIA memo in the 1960s aimed at discrediting those questioning the nonsensical official story of the Kennedy assassination and it subsequently became widely employed by the media. It's still being used by inept 'journalists' with no idea of its origin to discredit anyone questioning anything that authority claims to be true. When you are perpetrating a conspiracy you need to discredit the very word itself even though the dictionary definition of conspiracy is merely 'the activity of secretly planning with other people to do something bad or illegal' and 'a general agreement to keep silent about a subject for the purpose of keeping it secret'. On that basis there are conspiracies almost wherever you look. For obvious reasons the Cult and its lapdog media have to claim there are no conspiracies even though the word appears in state laws as with conspiracy to defraud, to murder, and to corrupt public morals.

Agent provocateurs are widely used by the Cult Deep State to manipulate genuine people into acting in ways that suit the desired outcome. By genuine in this case I mean protestors genuinely supporting Trump and claims that the election was stolen. In among them, however, were agents of the state wearing the garb of Trump supporters and QAnon to pump-prime the Capital riot which some genuine Trump supporters naively fell for. I described the situation as 'Come into my parlour said the spider to the fly'. Leaflets appeared through the Woke paramilitary arm Antifa, the anti-fascist fascists, calling on supporters to turn up in Washington looking like Trump supporters even though they hated him. Some of those arrested for breaching the Capitol Building were sourced to Antifa and its stable mate Black Lives Matter. Both organisations are funded by Cult billionaires and corporations. One man charged for the riot was according to his lawyer a former FBI agent who had held top secret security clearance for 40 years. Attorney Thomas Plofchan said of his client, 66-year-old Thomas Edward Caldwell:

He has held a Top Secret Security Clearance since 1979 and has undergone multiple Special Background Investigations in support of his clearances. After retiring from the Navy, he

worked as a section chief for the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 2009-2010 as a GS-12 [mid-level employee].

He also formed and operated a consulting firm performing work, often classified, for U.S government customers including the US. Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Housing and Urban Development, the US Coast Guard, and the US Army Personnel Command.

A judge later released Caldwell pending trial in the absence of evidence about a conspiracy or that he tried to force his way into the building. *The New York Post* reported a 'law enforcement source' as saying that 'at least two known Antifa members were spotted' on camera among Trump supporters during the riot while one of the rioters arrested was John Earle Sullivan, a seriously extreme Black Lives Matter Trump-hater from Utah who was previously arrested and charged in July, 2020, over a BLM-Antifa riot in which drivers were threatened and one was shot. Sullivan is the founder of Utah-based Insurgence USA which is an affiliate of the Cult-created-and-funded Black Lives Matter movement. Footage appeared and was then deleted by Twitter of Trump supporters calling out Antifa infiltrators and a group was filmed changing into pro-Trump clothing before the riot. Security at the building was *pathetic* – as planned. Colonel Leroy Fletcher Prouty, a man with long experience in covert operations working with the US security apparatus, once described the tell-tale sign to identify who is involved in an assassination. He said:

No one has to direct an assassination – it happens. The active role is played secretly by permitting it to happen. This is the greatest single clue. Who has the power to call off or reduce the usual security precautions?

This principle applies to many other situations and certainly to the Capitol riot of January 6th, 2021.

The sting

With such a big and potentially angry crowd known to be gathering near the Capitol the security apparatus would have had a major police detail to defend the building with National Guard troops on

standby given the strength of feeling among people arriving from all over America encouraged by the QAnon Psyop and statements by Donald Trump. Instead Capitol Police 'security' was flimsy, weak, and easily breached. The same number of officers was deployed as on a regular day and that is a blatant red flag. They were not staffed or equipped for a possible riot that had been an obvious possibility in the circumstances. No protective and effective fencing worth the name was put in place and there were no contingency plans. The whole thing was basically a case of standing aside and waving people in. Once inside police mostly backed off apart from one Capitol police officer who ridiculously shot dead unarmed Air Force veteran protestor Ashli Babbitt without a warning as she climbed through a broken window. The 'investigation' refused to name or charge the officer after what must surely be considered a murder in the circumstances. They just lifted a carpet and swept. The story was endlessly repeated about five people dying in the 'armed insurrection' when there was no report of rioters using weapons. Apart from Babbitt the other four died from a heart attack, strokes and apparently a drug overdose. Capitol police officer Brian Sicknick was reported to have died after being bludgeoned with a fire extinguisher when he was alive after the riot was over and died later of what the Washington Medical Examiner's Office said was a stroke. Sicknick had no external injuries. The lies were delivered like rapid fire. There was a narrative to build with incessant repetition of the lie until the lie became the accepted 'everybody knows that' truth. The 'Big Lie' technique of Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels is constantly used by the Cult which was behind the Nazis and is today behind the 'Covid' and 'climate change' hoaxes. Goebbels said:

If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.

Most protestors had a free run of the Capitol Building. This allowed pictures to be taken of rioters in iconic parts of the building including the Senate chamber which could be used as propaganda images against all Pushbackers. One Congresswoman described the scene as 'the worst kind of non-security anybody could ever imagine'. Well, the first part was true, but someone obviously did imagine it and made sure it happened. Some photographs most widely circulated featured people wearing QAnon symbols and now the Psyop would be used to dub all QAnon followers with the ubiquitous fit-all label of 'white supremacist' and 'insurrectionists'. When a Muslim extremist called Noah Green drove his car at two police officers at the Capitol Building killing one in April, 2021, there was no such political and media hysteria. They were just disappointed he wasn't white.

The witch-hunt

Government prosecutor Michael Sherwin, an aggressive, dark-eyed, professional Rottweiler led the 'investigation' and to call it over the top would be to understate reality a thousand fold. Hundreds were tracked down and arrested for the crime of having the wrong political views and people were jailed who had done nothing more than walk in the building, committed no violence or damage to property, took a few pictures and left. They were labelled a 'threat to the Republic' while Biden sat in the White House signing executive orders written for him that were dismantling 'the Republic'. Even when judges ruled that a mother and son should not be in jail the government kept them there. Some of those arrested have been badly beaten by prison guards in Washington and lawyers for one man said he suffered a fractured skull and was made blind in one eye. Meanwhile a woman is shot dead for no reason by a Capitol Police officer and we are not allowed to know who he is never mind what has happened to him although that will be *nothing*. The Cult's QAnon/Trump sting to identify and isolate Pushbackers and then target them on the road to crushing and deleting them was a resounding success. You would have thought the Russians had

invaded the building at gunpoint and lined up senators for a firing squad to see the political and media reaction. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is a child in a woman's body, a terrible-tuos, me, me, me, Woker narcissist of such proportions that words have no meaning. She said she thought she was going to die when 'insurrectionists' banged on her office door. It turned out she wasn't even in the Capitol Building when the riot was happening and the 'banging' was a Capitol Police officer. She referred to herself as a 'survivor' which is an insult to all those true survivors of violent and sexual abuse while she lives her pampered and privileged life talking drivel for a living. Her Woke colleague and fellow mega-narcissist Rashida Tlaib broke down describing the devastating effect on her, too, of *not being* in the building when the rioters were there. Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib are members of a fully-Woke group of Congresswomen known as 'The Squad' along with Ilhan Omar and Ayanna Pressley. The Squad from what I can see can be identified by its vehement anti-white racism, anti-white men agenda, and, as always in these cases, the absence of brain cells on active duty.

The usual suspects were on the riot case immediately in the form of Democrat ultra-Zionist senators and operatives Chuck Schumer and Adam Schiff demanding that Trump be impeached for 'his part in the insurrection'. The same pair of prats had led the failed impeachment of Trump over the invented 'Russia collusion' nonsense which claimed Russia had helped Trump win the 2016 election. I didn't realise that Tel Aviv had been relocated just outside Moscow. I must find an up-to-date map. The Russia hoax was a Sabbatian operation to keep Trump occupied and impotent and to stop any rapport with Russia which the Cult wants to retain as a perceptual enemy to be pulled out at will. Puppet Biden began attacking Russia when he came to office as the Cult seeks more upheaval, division and war across the world. A two-year stage show 'Russia collusion inquiry' headed by the not-very-bright former 9/11 FBI chief Robert Mueller, with support from 19 lawyers, 40 FBI agents plus intelligence analysts, forensic accountants and other

staff, devoured tens of millions of dollars and found no evidence of Russia collusion which a ten-year-old could have told them on day one. Now the same moronic Schumer and Schiff wanted a second impeachment of Trump over the Capitol 'insurrection' (riot) which the arrested development of Schumer called another 'Pearl Harbor' while others compared it with 9/11 in which 3,000 died and, in the case of CNN, with the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s in which an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 were murdered, between 250, 000 and 500,000 women were raped, and populations of whole towns were hacked to death with machetes. To make those comparisons purely for Cult political reasons is beyond insulting to those that suffered and lost their lives and confirms yet again the callous inhumanity that we are dealing with. Schumer is a monumental idiot and so is Schiff, but they serve the Cult agenda and do whatever they're told so they get looked after. Talking of idiots – another inane man who spanned the Russia and Capitol impeachment attempts was Senator Eric Swalwell who had the nerve to accuse Trump of collusion with the Russians while sleeping with a Chinese spy called Christine Fang or 'Fang Fang' which is straight out of a Bond film no doubt starring Klaus Schwab as the bloke living on a secret island and controlling laser weapons positioned in space and pointing at world capitals. Fang Fang plays the part of Bond's infiltrator girlfriend which I'm sure she would enjoy rather more than sharing a bed with the brainless Swalwell, lying back and thinking of China. The FBI eventually warned Swalwell about Fang Fang which gave her time to escape back to the Chinese dictatorship. How very thoughtful of them. The second Trump impeachment also failed and hardly surprising when an impeachment is supposed to remove a sitting president and by the time it happened Trump was no longer president. These people are running your country America, well, officially anyway. Terrifying isn't it?

Outcomes tell the story - always

The outcome of all this – and it's the *outcome* on which Renegade Minds focus, not the words – was that a vicious, hysterical and

obviously pre-planned assault was launched on Pushbackers to censor, silence and discredit them and even targeted their right to earn a living. They have since been condemned as 'domestic terrorists' that need to be treated like Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. 'Domestic terrorists' is a label the Cult has been trying to make stick since the period of the Oklahoma bombing in 1995 which was blamed on 'far-right domestic terrorists'. If you read *The Trigger* you will see that the bombing was clearly a Problem-Reaction-Solution carried out by the Deep State during a Bill Clinton administration so corrupt that no dictionary definition of the term would even nearly suffice. Nearly 30, 000 troops were deployed from all over America to the empty streets of Washington for Biden's inauguration. Ten thousand of them stayed on with the pretext of protecting the capital from insurrectionists when it was more psychological programming to normalise the use of the military in domestic law enforcement in support of the Cult plan for a police-military state. Biden's fascist administration began a purge of 'wrong-thinkers' in the military which means anyone that is not on board with Woke. The Capitol Building was surrounded by a fence with razor wire and the Land of the Free was further symbolically and literally dismantled. The circle was completed with the installation of Biden and the exploitation of the QAnon Psyop.

America had never been so divided since the civil war of the 19th century, Pushbackers were isolated and dubbed terrorists and now, as was always going to happen, the Cult immediately set about deleting what little was left of freedom and transforming American society through a swish of the hand of the most controlled 'president' in American history leading (officially at least) the most extreme regime since the country was declared an independent state on July 4th, 1776. Biden issued undebated, dictatorial executive orders almost by the hour in his opening days in office across the whole spectrum of the Cult wish-list including diluting controls on the border with Mexico allowing thousands of migrants to illegally enter the United States to transform the demographics of America and import an election-changing number of perceived Democrat

voters. Then there were Biden deportation amnesties for the already illegally resident (estimated to be as high as 20 or even 30 million). A bill before Congress awarded American citizenship to anyone who could prove they had worked in agriculture for just 180 days in the previous two years as 'Big Ag' secured its slave labour long-term. There were the plans to add new states to the union such as Puerto Rico and making Washington DC a state. They are all parts of a plan to ensure that the Cult-owned Woke Democrats would be permanently in power.

Border – what border?

I have exposed in detail in other books how mass immigration into the United States and Europe is the work of Cult networks fuelled by the tens of billions spent to this and other ends by George Soros and his global Open Society (open borders) Foundations. The impact can be seen in America alone where the population has increased by *100 million* in little more than 30 years mostly through immigration. I wrote in *The Answer* that the plan was to have so many people crossing the southern border that the numbers become unstoppable and we are now there under Cult-owned Biden. El Salvador in Central America puts the scale of what is happening into context. A third of the population now lives in the United States, much of it illegally, and many more are on the way. The methodology is to crush Central and South American countries economically and spread violence through machete-wielding psychopathic gangs like MS-13 based in El Salvador and now operating in many American cities. Biden-imposed lax security at the southern border means that it is all but open. He said before his 'election' that he wanted to see a surge towards the border if he became president and that was the green light for people to do just that after election day to create the human disaster that followed for both America and the migrants. When that surge came the imbecilic Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said it wasn't a 'surge' because they are 'children, not insurgents' and the term 'surge' (used by Biden) was a claim of 'white supremacists'.

This disingenuous lady may one day enter the realm of the most basic intelligence, but it won't be any time soon.

Sabbatians and the Cult are in the process of destroying America by importing violent people and gangs in among the genuine to terrorise American cities and by overwhelming services that cannot cope with the sheer volume of new arrivals. Something similar is happening in Europe as Western society in general is targeted for demographic and cultural transformation and upheaval. The plan demands violence and crime to create an environment of intimidation, fear and division and Soros has been funding the election of district attorneys across America who then stop prosecuting many crimes, reduce sentences for violent crimes and free as many violent criminals as they can. Sabbatians are creating the chaos from which order – their order – can respond in a classic Problem-Reaction-Solution. A Freemasonic moto says 'Ordo Ab Chao' (Order out of Chaos) and this is why the Cult is constantly creating chaos to impose a new 'order'. Here you have the reason the Cult is constantly creating chaos. The 'Covid' hoax can be seen with those entering the United States by plane being forced to take a 'Covid' test while migrants flooding through southern border processing facilities do not. Nothing is put in the way of mass migration and if that means ignoring the government's own 'Covid' rules then so be it. They know it's all bullshit anyway. Any pushback on this is denounced as 'racist' by Wokers and Sabbatian fronts like the ultra-Zionist Anti-Defamation League headed by the appalling Jonathan Greenblatt which at the same time argues that Israel should not give citizenship and voting rights to more Palestinian Arabs or the 'Jewish population' (in truth the Sabbatian network) will lose control of the country.

Society-changing numbers

Biden's masters have declared that countries like El Salvador are so dangerous that their people must be allowed into the United States for humanitarian reasons when there are fewer murders in large parts of many Central American countries than in US cities like

Baltimore. That is not to say Central America cannot be a dangerous place and Cult-controlled American governments have been making it so since way back, along with the dismantling of economies, in a long-term plan to drive people north into the United States. Parts of Central America are very dangerous, but in other areas the story is being greatly exaggerated to justify relaxing immigration criteria. Migrants are being offered free healthcare and education in the United States as another incentive to head for the border and there is no requirement to be financially independent before you can enter to prevent the resources of America being drained. You can't blame migrants for seeking what they believe will be a better life, but they are being played by the Cult for dark and nefarious ends. The numbers since Biden took office are huge. In February, 2021, more than 100,000 people were known to have tried to enter the US illegally through the southern border (it was 34,000 in the same month in 2020) and in March it was 170,000 – a 418 percent increase on March, 2020. These numbers are only known people, not the ones who get in unseen. The true figure for migrants illegally crossing the border in a single month was estimated by one congressman at 250,000 and that number will only rise under Biden's current policy. Gangs of murdering drug-running thugs that control the Mexican side of the border demand money – thousands of dollars – to let migrants cross the Rio Grande into America. At the same time gun battles are breaking out on the border several times a week between rival Mexican drug gangs (which now operate globally) who are equipped with sophisticated military-grade weapons, grenades and armoured vehicles. While the Capitol Building was being 'protected' from a non-existent 'threat' by thousands of troops, and others were still deployed at the time in the Cult Neocon war in Afghanistan, the southern border of America was left to its fate. This is not incompetence, it is cold calculation.

By March, 2021, there were 17,000 unaccompanied children held at border facilities and many of them are ensnared by people traffickers for paedophile rings and raped on their journey north to America. This is not conjecture – this is fact. Many of those designated

children are in reality teenage boys or older. Meanwhile Wokers posture their self-purity for encouraging poor and tragic people to come to America and face this nightmare both on the journey and at the border with the disgusting figure of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi giving disingenuous speeches about caring for migrants. The woman's evil. Wokers condemned Trump for having children in cages at the border (so did Obama, *Shhhh*), but now they are sleeping on the floor without access to a shower with one border facility 729 percent over capacity. The Biden insanity even proposed flying migrants from the southern border to the northern border with Canada for 'processing'. The whole shambles is being overseen by ultra-Zionist Secretary of Homeland Security, the moronic liar Alejandro Mayorkas, who banned news cameras at border facilities to stop Americans seeing what was happening. Mayorkas said there was not a ban on news crews; it was just that they were not allowed to film. Alongside him at Homeland Security is another ultra-Zionist Cass Sunstein appointed by Biden to oversee new immigration laws. Sunstein despises conspiracy researchers to the point where he suggests they should be banned or *taxed* for having such views. The man is not bonkers or anything. He's perfectly well-adjusted, but adjusted to what is the question. Criticise what is happening and you are a 'white supremacist' when earlier non-white immigrants also oppose the numbers which effect their lives and opportunities. Black people in poor areas are particularly damaged by uncontrolled immigration and the increased competition for work opportunities with those who will work for less. They are also losing voting power as Hispanics become more dominant in former black areas. It's a downward spiral for them while the billionaires behind the policy drone on about how much they care about black people and 'racism'. None of this is about compassion for migrants or black people – that's just wind and air. Migrants are instead being mercilessly exploited to transform America while the countries they leave are losing their future and the same is true in Europe. Mass immigration may now be the work of Woke Democrats, but it can be traced back to the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (it

wasn't) signed into law by Republican hero President Ronald Reagan which gave amnesty to millions living in the United States illegally and other incentives for people to head for the southern border. Here we have the one-party state at work again.

Save me syndrome

Almost every aspect of what I have been exposing as the Cult agenda was on display in even the first days of 'Biden' with silencing of Pushbackers at the forefront of everything. A Renegade Mind will view the Trump years and QAnon in a very different light to their supporters and advocates as the dots are connected. The QAnon/Trump Psyop has given the Cult all it was looking for. We may not know how much, or little, that Trump realised he was being used, but that's a side issue. This pincer movement produced the desired outcome of dividing America and having Pushbackers isolated. To turn this around we have to look at new routes to empowerment which do not include handing our power to other people and groups through what I will call the 'Save Me Syndrome' – 'I want someone else to do it so that I don't have to'. We have seen this at work throughout human history and the QAnon/Trump Psyop is only the latest incarnation alongside all the others. Religion is an obvious expression of this when people look to a 'god' or priest to save them or tell them how to be saved and then there are 'save me' politicians like Trump. Politics is a diversion and not a 'saviour'. It is a means to block positive change, not make it possible.

Save Me Syndrome always comes with the same repeating theme of handing your power to whom or what you believe will save you while your real 'saviour' stares back from the mirror every morning. Renegade Minds are constantly vigilant in this regard and always asking the question 'What can I do?' rather than 'What can someone else do for me?' Gandhi was right when he said: 'You must be the change you want to see in the world.' We are indeed the people we have been waiting for. We are presented with a constant raft of reasons to concede that power to others and forget where the real power is. Humanity has the numbers and the Cult does not. It has to

use diversion and division to target the unstoppable power that comes from unity. Religions, governments, politicians, corporations, media, QAnon, are all different manifestations of this power-diversion and dilution. Refusing to give your power to governments and instead handing it to Trump and QAnon is not to take a new direction, but merely to recycle the old one with new names on the posters. I will explore this phenomenon as we proceed and how to break the cycles and recycles that got us here through the mists of repeating perception and so repeating history.

For now we shall turn to the most potent example in the entire human story of the consequences that follow when you give your power away. I am talking, of course, of the 'Covid' hoax.

CHAPTER FOUR

'Covid': Calculated catastrophe

Facts are threatening to those invested in fraud
DaShanne Stokes

We can easily unravel the real reason for the 'Covid pandemic' hoax by employing the Renegade Mind methodology that I have outlined this far. We'll start by comparing the long-planned Cult outcome with the 'Covid pandemic' outcome. Know the outcome and you'll see the journey.

I have highlighted the plan for the Hunger Games Society which has been in my books for so many years with the very few controlling the very many through ongoing dependency. To create this dependency it is essential to destroy independent livelihoods, businesses and employment to make the population reliant on the state (the Cult) for even the basics of life through a guaranteed pittance income. While independence of income remained these Cult ambitions would be thwarted. With this knowledge it was easy to see where the 'pandemic' hoax was going once talk of 'lockdowns' began and the closing of all but perceived 'essential' businesses to 'save' us from an alleged 'deadly virus'. Cult corporations like Amazon and Walmart were naturally considered 'essential' while mom and pop shops and stores had their doors closed by fascist decree. As a result with every new lockdown and new regulation more small and medium, even large businesses not owned by the Cult, went to the wall while Cult giants and their frontmen and women grew financially fatter by the second. Mom and pop were

denied an income and the right to earn a living and the wealth of people like Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) and Sergei Brin and Larry Page (Google/Alphabet) have reached record levels. The Cult was increasing its own power through further dramatic concentrations of wealth while the competition was being destroyed and brought into a state of dependency. Lockdowns have been instigated to secure that very end and were never anything to do with health. My brother Paul spent 45 years building up a bus repair business, but lockdowns meant buses were running at a fraction of normal levels for months on end. Similar stories can be told in their hundreds of millions worldwide. Efforts of a lifetime coldly destroyed by Cult multi-billionaires and their lackeys in government and law enforcement who continued to earn their living from the taxation of the people while denying the right of the same people to earn theirs. How different it would have been if those making and enforcing these decisions had to face the same financial hardships of those they affected, but they never do.

Gates of Hell

Behind it all in the full knowledge of what he is doing and why is the psychopathic figure of Cult operative Bill Gates. His puppet Tedros at the World Health Organization declared 'Covid' a pandemic in March, 2020. The WHO had changed the definition of a 'pandemic' in 2009 just a month before declaring the 'swine flu pandemic' which would not have been so under the previous definition. The same applies to 'Covid'. The definition had included... 'an infection by an infectious agent, occurring simultaneously in different countries, with a significant mortality rate relative to the proportion of the population infected'. The new definition removed the need for 'significant mortality'. The 'pandemic' has been fraudulent even down to the definition, but Gates demanded economy-destroying lockdowns, school closures, social distancing, mandatory masks, a 'vaccination' for every man, woman and child on the planet and severe consequences and restrictions for those that refused. Who gave him this power? The

Cult did which he serves like a little boy in short trousers doing what his daddy tells him. He and his psychopathic missus even smiled when they said that much worse was to come (what they knew was planned to come). Gates responded in the matter-of-fact way of all psychopaths to a question about the effect on the world economy of what he was doing:

Well, it won't go to zero but it will shrink. Global GDP is probably going to take the biggest hit ever [Gates was smiling as he said this] ... in my lifetime this will be the greatest economic hit. But you don't have a choice. People act as if you have a choice. People don't feel like going to the stadium when they might get infected ... People are deeply affected by seeing these stats, by knowing they could be part of the transmission chain, old people, their parents and grandparents, could be affected by this, and so you don't get to say ignore what is going on here.

There will be the ability to open up, particularly in rich countries, if things are done well over the next few months, but for the world at large normalcy only returns when we have largely vaccinated the entire population.

The man has no compassion or empathy. How could he when he's a psychopath like all Cult players? My own view is that even beyond that he is very seriously mentally ill. Look in his eyes and you can see this along with his crazy flailing arms. You don't do what he has done to the world population since the start of 2020 unless you are mentally ill and at the most extreme end of psychopathic. You especially don't do it when to you know, as we shall see, that cases and deaths from 'Covid' are fakery and a product of monumental figure massaging. 'These stats' that Gates referred to are based on a 'test' that's not testing for the 'virus' as he has known all along. He made his fortune with big Cult support as an infamously ruthless software salesman and now buys global control of 'health' (death) policy without the population he affects having any say. It's a breathtaking outrage. Gates talked about people being deeply affected by fear of 'Covid' when that was because of *him* and his global network lying to them minute-by-minute supported by a lying media that he seriously influences and funds to the tune of hundreds of millions. He's handed big sums to media operations including the BBC, NBC, Al Jazeera, Univision, *PBS NewsHour*,

ProPublica, National Journal, The Guardian, The Financial Times, The Atlantic, Texas Tribune, USA Today publisher Gannett, Washington Monthly, Le Monde, Center for Investigative Reporting, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, National Press Foundation, International Center for Journalists, Solutions Journalism Network, the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, and many more. Gates is everywhere in the 'Covid' hoax and the man must go to prison – or a mental facility – for the rest of his life and his money distributed to those he has taken such enormous psychopathic pleasure in crushing.

The Muscle

The Hunger Games global structure demands a police-military state – a fusion of the two into one force – which viciously imposes the will of the Cult on the population and protects the Cult from public rebellion. In that regard, too, the 'Covid' hoax just keeps on giving. Often unlawful, ridiculous and contradictory 'Covid' rules and regulations have been policed across the world by moronic automatons and psychopaths made faceless by face-nappy masks and acting like the Nazi SS and fascist blackshirts and brownshirts of Hitler and Mussolini. The smallest departure from the rules decreed by the psychos in government and their clueless gofers were jumped upon by the face-nappy fascists. Brutality against public protestors soon became commonplace even on girls, women and old people as the brave men with the batons – the Face-Nappies as I call them – broke up peaceful protests and handed out fines like confetti to people who couldn't earn a living let alone pay hundreds of pounds for what was once an accepted human right. Robot Face-Nappies of Nottingham police in the English East Midlands fined one group £11,000 for attending a child's birthday party. For decades I charted the transformation of law enforcement as genuine, decent officers were replaced with psychopaths and the brain dead who would happily and brutally do whatever their masters told them. Now they were let loose on the public and I would emphasise the point that none of this just happened. The step-by-step change in the dynamic between police and public was orchestrated from the shadows by

those who knew where this was all going and the same with the perceptual reframing of those in all levels of authority and official administration through 'training courses' by organisations such as Common Purpose which was created in the late 1980s and given a massive boost in Blair era Britain until it became a global phenomenon. Supposed public 'servants' began to view the population as the enemy and the same was true of the police. This was the start of the explosion of behaviour manipulation organisations and networks preparing for the all-war on the human psyche unleashed with the dawn of 2020. I will go into more detail about this later in the book because it is a core part of what is happening.

Police desecrated beauty spots to deter people gathering and arrested women for walking in the countryside alone 'too far' from their homes. We had arrogant, clueless sergeants in the Isle of Wight police where I live posting on Facebook what they insisted the population must do or else. A schoolmaster sergeant called Radford looked young enough for me to ask if his mother knew he was out, but he was posting what he *expected* people to do while a Sergeant Wilkinson boasted about fining lads for meeting in a McDonald's car park where they went to get a lockdown takeaway. Wilkinson added that he had even cancelled their order. What a pair of prats these people are and yet they have increasingly become the norm among Jackboot Johnson's Yellowshirts once known as the British police. This was the theme all over the world with police savagery common during lockdown protests in the United States, the Netherlands, and the fascist state of Victoria in Australia under its tyrannical and again moronic premier Daniel Andrews. Amazing how tyrannical and moronic tend to work as a team and the same combination could be seen across America as arrogant, narcissistic Woke governors and mayors such as Gavin Newsom (California), Andrew Cuomo (New York), Gretchen Whitmer (Michigan), Lori Lightfoot (Chicago) and Eric Garcetti (Los Angeles) did their Nazi and Stalin impressions with the full support of the compliant brutality of their enforcers in uniform as they arrested small business owners defying

fascist shutdown orders and took them to jail in ankle shackles and handcuffs. This happened to bistro owner Marlena Pavlos-Hackney in Gretchen Whitmer's fascist state of Michigan when police arrived to enforce an order by a state-owned judge for 'putting the community at risk' at a time when other states like Texas were dropping restrictions and migrants were pouring across the southern border without any 'Covid' questions at all. I'm sure there are many officers appalled by what they are ordered to do, but not nearly enough of them. If they were truly appalled they would not do it. As the months passed every opportunity was taken to have the military involved to make their presence on the streets ever more familiar and 'normal' for the longer-term goal of police-military fusion.

Another crucial element to the Hunger Games enforcement network has been encouraging the public to report neighbours and others for 'breaking the lockdown rules'. The group faced with £11,000 in fines at the child's birthday party would have been dobbed-in by a neighbour with a brain the size of a pea. The technique was most famously employed by the Stasi secret police in communist East Germany who had public informants placed throughout the population. A police chief in the UK says his force doesn't need to carry out 'Covid' patrols when they are flooded with so many calls from the public reporting other people for visiting the beach. Dorset police chief James Vaughan said people were so enthusiastic about snitching on their fellow humans they were now operating as an auxiliary arm of the police: 'We are still getting around 400 reports a week from the public, so we will respond to reports ... We won't need to be doing hotspot patrols because people are very quick to pick the phone up and tell us.' Vaughan didn't say that this is a pillar of all tyrannies of whatever complexion and the means to hugely extend the reach of enforcement while spreading distrust among the people and making them wary of doing anything that might get them reported. Those narcissistic Isle of Wight sergeants Radford and Wilkinson never fail to add a link to their Facebook posts where the public can inform on their fellow slaves.

Neither would be self-aware enough to realise they were imitating the Stasi which they might well never have heard of. Government psychologists that I will expose later laid out a policy to turn communities against each other in the same way.

A coincidence? Yep, and I can knit fog

I knew from the start of the alleged pandemic that this was a Cult operation. It presented limitless potential to rapidly advance the Cult agenda and exploit manipulated fear to demand that every man, woman and child on the planet was 'vaccinated' in a process never used on humans before which infuses self-replicating *synthetic* material into human cells. Remember the plan to transform the human body from a biological to a synthetic biological state. I'll deal with the 'vaccine' (that's not actually a vaccine) when I focus on the genetic agenda. Enough to say here that mass global 'vaccination' justified by this 'new virus' set alarms ringing after 30 years of tracking these people and their methods. The 'Covid' hoax officially beginning in China was also a big red flag for reasons I will be explaining. The agenda potential was so enormous that I could dismiss any idea that the 'virus' appeared naturally. Major happenings with major agenda implications never occur without Cult involvement in making them happen. My questions were twofold in early 2020 as the media began its campaign to induce global fear and hysteria: Was this alleged infectious agent released on purpose by the Cult or did it even exist at all? I then did what I always do in these situations. I sat, observed and waited to see where the evidence and information would take me. By March and early April synchronicity was strongly – and ever more so since then – pointing me in the direction of *there is no 'virus'*. I went public on that with derision even from swathes of the alternative media that voiced a scenario that the Chinese government released the 'virus' in league with Deep State elements in the United States from a top-level bio-lab in Wuhan where the 'virus' is said to have first appeared. I looked at that possibility, but I didn't buy it for several reasons. Deaths from the 'virus' did not in any way match what they

would have been with a 'deadly bioweapon' and it is much more effective if you sell the *illusion* of an infectious agent rather than having a real one unless you can control through injection who has it and who doesn't. Otherwise you lose control of events. A made-up 'virus' gives you a blank sheet of paper on which you can make it do whatever you like and have any symptoms or mutant 'variants' you choose to add while a real infectious agent would limit you to what it actually does. A phantom disease allows you to have endless ludicrous 'studies' on the 'Covid' dollar to widen the perceived impact by inventing ever more 'at risk' groups including one study which said those who walk slowly may be almost four times more likely to die from the 'virus'. People are in psychiatric wards for less.

A real 'deadly bioweapon' can take out people in the hierarchy that are not part of the Cult, but essential to its operation. Obviously they don't want that. Releasing a real disease means you immediately lose control of it. Releasing an illusory one means you don't. Again it's vital that people are extra careful when dealing with what they want to hear. A bioweapon unleashed from a Chinese laboratory in collusion with the American Deep State may fit a conspiracy narrative, but is it true? Would it not be far more effective to use the excuse of a 'virus' to justify the real bioweapon – the 'vaccine'? That way your disease agent does not have to be transmitted and arrives directly through a syringe. I saw a French virologist Luc Montagnier quoted in the alternative media as saying he had discovered that the alleged 'new' severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus , or SARS-CoV-2, was made artificially and included elements of the human immunodeficiency 'virus' (HIV) and a parasite that causes malaria. SARS-CoV-2 is alleged to trigger an alleged illness called Covid-19. I remembered Montagnier's name from my research years before into claims that an HIV 'retrovirus' causes AIDs – claims that were demolished by Berkeley virologist Peter Duesberg who showed that no one had ever proved that HIV causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome or AIDS. Claims that become accepted as fact, publicly and medically, with no proof whatsoever are an ever-recurring story that profoundly applies to

‘Covid’. Nevertheless, despite the lack of proof, Montagnier’s team at the Pasteur Institute in Paris had a long dispute with American researcher Robert Gallo over which of them discovered and isolated the HIV ‘virus’ and with *no evidence* found it to cause AIDS. You will see later that there is also no evidence that any ‘virus’ causes any disease or that there is even such a thing as a ‘virus’ in the way it is said to exist. The claim to have ‘isolated’ the HIV ‘virus’ will be presented in its real context as we come to the shocking story – and it is a story – of SARS-CoV-2 and so will Montagnier’s assertion that he identified the full SARS-CoV-2 genome.

Hoax in the making

We can pick up the ‘Covid’ story in 2010 and the publication by the Rockefeller Foundation of a document called ‘Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development’. The inner circle of the Rockefeller family has been serving the Cult since John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) made his fortune with Standard Oil. It is less well known that the same Rockefeller – the Bill Gates of his day – was responsible for establishing what is now referred to as ‘Big Pharma’, the global network of pharmaceutical companies that make outrageous profits dispensing scalpel and drug ‘medicine’ and are obsessed with pumping vaccines in ever-increasing number into as many human arms and backsides as possible. John D. Rockefeller was the driving force behind the creation of the ‘education’ system in the United States and elsewhere specifically designed to program the perceptions of generations thereafter. The Rockefeller family donated exceptionally valuable land in New York for the United Nations building and were central in establishing the World Health Organization in 1948 as an agency of the UN which was created from the start as a Trojan horse and stalking horse for world government. Now enter Bill Gates. His family and the Rockefellers have long been extremely close and I have seen genealogy which claims that if you go back far enough the two families fuse into the same bloodline. Gates has said that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was inspired by the Rockefeller Foundation and why not

when both are serving the same Cult? Major tax-exempt foundations are overwhelmingly criminal enterprises in which Cult assets fund the Cult agenda in the guise of 'philanthropy' while avoiding tax in the process. Cult operatives can become mega-rich in their role of front men and women for the psychopaths at the inner core and they, too, have to be psychopaths to knowingly serve such evil. Part of the deal is that a big percentage of the wealth gleaned from representing the Cult has to be spent advancing the ambitions of the Cult and hence you have the Rockefeller Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (and *so* many more) and people like George Soros with his global Open Society Foundations spending their billions in pursuit of global Cult control. Gates is a global public face of the Cult with his interventions in world affairs including Big Tech influence; a central role in the 'Covid' and 'vaccine' scam; promotion of the climate change shakedown; manipulation of education; geoengineering of the skies; and his food-control agenda as the biggest owner of farmland in America, his GMO promotion and through other means. As one writer said: 'Gates monopolizes or wields disproportionate influence over the tech industry, global health and vaccines, agriculture and food policy (including biopiracy and fake food), weather modification and other climate technologies, surveillance, education and media.' The almost limitless wealth secured through Microsoft and other not-allowed-to-fail ventures (including vaccines) has been ploughed into a long, long list of Cult projects designed to enslave the entire human race. Gates and the Rockefellers have been working as one unit with the Rockefeller-established World Health Organization leading global 'Covid' policy controlled by Gates through his mouth-piece Tedros. Gates became the WHO's biggest funder when Trump announced that the American government would cease its donations, but Biden immediately said he would restore the money when he took office in January, 2021. The Gates Foundation (the Cult) owns through limitless funding the world health system and the major players across the globe in the 'Covid' hoax.

Okay, with that background we return to that Rockefeller Foundation document of 2010 headed 'Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development' and its 'imaginary' epidemic of a virulent and deadly influenza strain which infected 20 percent of the global population and killed eight million in seven months. The Rockefeller scenario was that the epidemic destroyed economies, closed shops, offices and other businesses and led to governments imposing fierce rules and restrictions that included mandatory wearing of face masks and body-temperature checks to enter communal spaces like railway stations and supermarkets. The document predicted that even after the height of the Rockefeller-envisaged epidemic the authoritarian rule would continue to deal with further pandemics, transnational terrorism, environmental crises and rising poverty. Now you may think that the Rockefellers are our modern-day seers or alternatively, and rather more likely, that they well knew what was planned a few years further on. Fascism had to be imposed, you see, to 'protect citizens from risk and exposure'. The Rockefeller scenario document said:

During the pandemic, national leaders around the world flexed their authority and imposed airtight rules and restrictions, from the mandatory wearing of face masks to body-temperature checks at the entries to communal spaces like train stations and supermarkets. Even after the pandemic faded, this more authoritarian control and oversight of citizens and their activities stuck and even intensified. In order to protect themselves from the spread of increasingly global problems – from pandemics and transnational terrorism to environmental crises and rising poverty – leaders around the world took a firmer grip on power.

At first, the notion of a more controlled world gained wide acceptance and approval. Citizens willingly gave up some of their sovereignty – and their privacy – to more paternalistic states in exchange for greater safety and stability. Citizens were more tolerant, and even eager, for top-down direction and oversight, and national leaders had more latitude to impose order in the ways they saw fit.

In developed countries, this heightened oversight took many forms: biometric IDs for all citizens, for example, and tighter regulation of key industries whose stability was deemed vital to national interests. In many developed countries, enforced cooperation with a suite of new regulations and agreements slowly but steadily restored both order and, importantly, economic growth.

There we have the prophetic Rockefellers in 2010 and three years later came their paper for the Global Health Summit in Beijing, China, when government representatives, the private sector, international organisations and groups met to discuss the next 100 years of 'global health'. The Rockefeller Foundation-funded paper was called 'Dreaming the Future of Health for the Next 100 Years and more prophecy ensued as it described a dystopian future: 'The abundance of data, digitally tracking and linking people may mean the 'death of privacy' and may replace physical interaction with transient, virtual connection, generating isolation and raising questions of how values are shaped in virtual networks.' Next in the 'Covid' hoax preparation sequence came a 'table top' simulation in 2018 for another 'imaginary' pandemic of a disease called Clade X which was said to kill 900 million people. The exercise was organised by the Gates-funded Johns Hopkins University's Center for Health Security in the United States and this is the very same university that has been compiling the disgustingly and systematically erroneous global figures for 'Covid' cases and deaths. Similar Johns Hopkins health crisis scenarios have included the Dark Winter exercise in 2001 and Atlantic Storm in 2005.

Nostradamus 201

For sheer predictive genius look no further prophecy-watchers than the Bill Gates-funded Event 201 held only six weeks before the 'coronavirus pandemic' is supposed to have broken out in China and Event 201 was based on a scenario of a global 'coronavirus pandemic'. Melinda Gates, the great man's missus, told the BBC that he had 'prepared for years' for a coronavirus pandemic which told us what we already knew. Nostradamugates had predicted in a TED talk in 2015 that a pandemic was coming that would kill a lot of people and demolish the world economy. My god, the man is a machine – possibly even literally. Now here he was only weeks before the real thing funding just such a simulated scenario and involving his friends and associates at Johns Hopkins, the World Economic Forum Cult-front of Klaus Schwab, the United Nations,

Johnson & Johnson, major banks, and officials from China and the Centers for Disease Control in the United States. What synchronicity – Johns Hopkins would go on to compile the fraudulent ‘Covid’ figures, the World Economic Forum and Schwab would push the ‘Great Reset’ in response to ‘Covid’, the Centers for Disease Control would be at the forefront of ‘Covid’ policy in the United States, Johnson & Johnson would produce a ‘Covid vaccine’, and everything would officially start just weeks later in China. Spooky, eh? They were even accurate in creating a simulation of a ‘virus’ pandemic because the ‘real thing’ would also be a simulation. Event 201 was not an exercise preparing for something that might happen; it was a rehearsal for what those in control knew was *going* to happen and very shortly. Hours of this simulation were posted on the Internet and the various themes and responses mirrored what would soon be imposed to transform human society. News stories were inserted and what they said would be commonplace a few weeks later with still more prophecy perfection. Much discussion focused on the need to deal with misinformation and the ‘anti-vax movement’ which is exactly what happened when the ‘virus’ arrived – was said to have arrived – in the West.

Cult-owned social media banned criticism and exposure of the official ‘virus’ narrative and when I said there *was* no ‘virus’ in early April, 2020, I was banned by one platform after another including YouTube, Facebook and later Twitter. The mainstream broadcast media in Britain was in effect banned from interviewing me by the Tony-Blair-created government broadcasting censor Ofcom headed by career government bureaucrat Melanie Dawes who was appointed just as the ‘virus’ hoax was about to play out in January, 2020. At the same time the Ickonic media platform was using Vimeo, another ultra-Zionist-owned operation, while our own player was being created and they deleted in an instant hundreds of videos, documentaries, series and shows to confirm their unbelievable vindictiveness. We had copies, of course, and they had to be restored one by one when our player was ready. These people have no class. Sabbatian Facebook promised free advertisements for the Gates-

controlled World Health Organization narrative while deleting ‘false claims and conspiracy theories’ to stop ‘misinformation’ about the alleged coronavirus. All these responses could be seen just a short while earlier in the scenarios of Event 201. Extreme censorship was absolutely crucial for the Cult because the official story was so ridiculous and unsupportable by the evidence that it could never survive open debate and the free-flow of information and opinion. If you can’t win a debate then don’t have one is the Cult’s approach throughout history. Facebook’s little boy front man – front boy – Mark Zuckerberg equated ‘credible and accurate information’ with official sources and exposing their lies with ‘misinformation’.

Silencing those that can see

The censorship dynamic of Event 201 is now the norm with an army of narrative-supporting ‘fact-checker’ organisations whose entire reason for being is to tell the public that official narratives are true and those exposing them are lying. One of the most appalling of these ‘fact-checkers’ is called NewsGuard founded by ultra-Zionist Americans Gordon Crovitz and Steven Brill. Crovitz is a former publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, former Executive Vice President of Dow Jones, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and on the board of the American Association of Rhodes Scholars. The CFR and Rhodes Scholarships, named after Rothschild agent Cecil Rhodes who plundered the gold and diamonds of South Africa for his masters and the Cult, have featured widely in my books. NewsGuard don’t seem to like me for some reason – I really can’t think why – and they have done all they can to have me censored and discredited which is, to quote an old British politician, like being savaged by a dead sheep. They are, however, like all in the censorship network, very well connected and funded by organisations themselves funded by, or connected to, Bill Gates. As you would expect with anything associated with Gates NewsGuard has an offshoot called HealthGuard which ‘fights online health care hoaxes’. How very kind. Somehow the NewsGuard European Managing Director Anna-Sophie Harling, a remarkably young-

looking woman with no broadcasting experience and little hands-on work in journalism, has somehow secured a position on the 'Content Board' of UK government broadcast censor Ofcom. An executive of an organisation seeking to discredit dissidents of the official narratives is making decisions for the government broadcast 'regulator' about content?? Another appalling 'fact-checker' is Full Fact funded by George Soros and global censors Google and Facebook.

It's amazing how many activists in the 'fact-checking', 'anti-hate', arena turn up in government-related positions – people like UK Labour Party activist Imran Ahmed who heads the Center for Countering Digital Hate founded by people like Morgan McSweeney, now chief of staff to the Labour Party's hapless and useless 'leader' Keir Starmer. Digital Hate – which is what it really is – uses the American spelling of Center to betray its connection to a transatlantic network of similar organisations which in 2020 shapeshifted from attacking people for 'hate' to attacking them for questioning the 'Covid' hoax and the dangers of the 'Covid vaccine'. It's just a coincidence, you understand. This is one of Imran Ahmed's hysterical statements: 'I would go beyond calling anti-vaxxers conspiracy theorists to say they are an extremist group that pose a national security risk.' No one could ever accuse this prat of understatement and he's including in that those parents who are now against vaccines after their children were damaged for life or killed by them. He's such a nice man. Ahmed does the rounds of the Woke media getting soft-ball questions from spineless 'journalists' who never ask what right he has to campaign to destroy the freedom of speech of others while he demands it for himself. There also seems to be an overrepresentation in Ofcom of people connected to the narrative-worshipping BBC. This incredible global network of narrative-support was super-vital when the 'Covid' hoax was played in the light of the mega-whopper lies that have to be defended from the spotlight cast by the most basic intelligence.

Setting the scene

The Cult plays the long game and proceeds step-by-step ensuring that everything is in place before major cards are played and they don't come any bigger than the 'Covid' hoax. The psychopaths can't handle events where the outcome isn't certain and as little as possible – preferably nothing – is left to chance. Politicians, government and medical officials who would follow direction were brought to illusory power in advance by the Cult web whether on the national stage or others like state governors and mayors of America. For decades the dynamic between officialdom, law enforcement and the public was changed from one of service to one of control and dictatorship. Behaviour manipulation networks established within government were waiting to impose the coming 'Covid' rules and regulations specifically designed to subdue and rewire the psyche of the people in the guise of protecting health. These included in the UK the Behavioural Insights Team part-owned by the British government Cabinet Office; the Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours (SPI-B); and a whole web of intelligence and military groups seeking to direct the conversation on social media and control the narrative. Among them are the cyberwarfare (on the people) 77th Brigade of the British military which is also coordinated through the Cabinet Office as civilian and military leadership continues to combine in what they call the Fusion Doctrine. The 77th Brigade is a British equivalent of the infamous Israeli (Sabbatian) military cyberwarfare and Internet manipulation operation Unit 8200 which I expose at length in *The Trigger*. Also carefully in place were the medical and science advisers to government – many on the payroll past or present of Bill Gates – and a whole alternative structure of unelected government stood by to take control when elected parliaments were effectively closed down once the 'Covid' card was slammed on the table. The structure I have described here and so much more was installed in every major country through the Cult networks. The top-down control hierarchy looks like this: The Cult – Cult-owned Gates – the World Health Organization and Tedros – Gates-funded or controlled chief medical officers and science 'advisers' (dictators) in each country –

political 'leaders' – law enforcement – The People. Through this simple global communication and enforcement structure the policy of the Cult could be imposed on virtually the entire human population so long as they acquiesced to the fascism. With everything in place it was time for the button to be pressed in late 2019/early 2020.

These were the prime goals the Cult had to secure for its will to prevail:

- 1) Locking down economies, closing all but designated 'essential' businesses (Cult-owned corporations were 'essential'), and putting the population under house arrest was an imperative to destroy independent income and employment and ensure dependency on the Cult-controlled state in the Hunger Games Society. Lockdowns had to be established as the global blueprint from the start to respond to the 'virus' and followed by pretty much the entire world.
- 2) The global population had to be terrified into believing in a deadly 'virus' that didn't actually exist so they would unquestioningly obey authority in the belief that authority must know how best to protect them and their families. Software salesman Gates would suddenly morph into the world's health expert and be promoted as such by the Cult-owned media.
- 3) A method of testing that wasn't testing for the 'virus', but was only claimed to be, had to be in place to provide the illusion of 'cases' and subsequent 'deaths' that had a very different cause to the 'Covid-19' that would be scribbled on the death certificate.
- 4) Because there was no 'virus' and the great majority testing positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' would have no symptoms of anything the lie had to be sold that people without symptoms (without the 'virus') could still pass it on to others. This was crucial to justify for the first time quarantining – house arresting – healthy people. Without this the economy-destroying lockdown of *everybody* could not have been credibly sold.
- 5) The 'saviour' had to be seen as a vaccine which beyond evil drug companies were working like angels of mercy to develop as quickly as possible, with all corners cut, to save the day. The public must absolutely not know that the 'vaccine' had nothing to do with a 'virus' or that the contents were ready and waiting with a very different motive long before the 'Covid' card was even lifted from the pack.

I said in March, 2020, that the 'vaccine' would have been created way ahead of the 'Covid' hoax which justified its use and the following December an article in the New York *Intelligencer* magazine said the Moderna 'vaccine' had been 'designed' by

January, 2020. This was 'before China had even acknowledged that the disease could be transmitted from human to human, more than a week before the first confirmed coronavirus case in the United States'. The article said that by the time the first American death was announced a month later 'the vaccine had already been manufactured and shipped to the National Institutes of Health for the beginning of its Phase I clinical trial'. The 'vaccine' was actually 'designed' long before that although even with this timescale you would expect the article to ask how on earth it could have been done that quickly. Instead it asked why the 'vaccine' had not been rolled out then and not months later. Journalism in the mainstream is truly dead. I am going to detail in the next chapter why the 'virus' has never existed and how a hoax on that scale was possible, but first the foundation on which the Big Lie of 'Covid' was built.

The test that doesn't test

Fraudulent 'testing' is the bottom line of the whole 'Covid' hoax and was the means by which a 'virus' that did not exist *appeared* to exist. They could only achieve this magic trick by using a test not testing for the 'virus'. To use a test that *was* testing for the 'virus' would mean that every test would come back negative given there was no 'virus'. They chose to exploit something called the RT-PCR test invented by American biochemist Kary Mullis in the 1980s who said publicly that his PCR test ... *cannot detect infectious disease*. Yes, the 'test' used worldwide to detect infectious 'Covid' to produce all the illusory 'cases' and 'deaths' compiled by Johns Hopkins and others *cannot detect infectious disease*. This fact came from the mouth of the man who invented PCR and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1993 for doing so. Sadly, and incredibly conveniently for the Cult, Mullis died in August, 2019, at the age of 74 just before his test would be fraudulently used to unleash fascism on the world. He was said to have died from pneumonia which was an irony in itself. A few months later he would have had 'Covid-19' on his death certificate. I say the timing of his death was convenient because had he lived Mullis, a brilliant, honest and decent man, would have been

vociferously speaking out against the use of his test to detect 'Covid' when it was never designed, or able, to do that. I know that to be true given that Mullis made the same point when his test was used to 'detect' – not detect – HIV. He had been seriously critical of the Gallo/Montagnier claim to have isolated the HIV 'virus' and shown it to cause AIDS for which Mullis said there was no evidence. AIDS is actually not a disease but a series of diseases from which people die all the time. When they die from those *same diseases* after a positive 'test' for HIV then AIDS goes on their death certificate. I think I've heard that before somewhere. Countries instigated a policy with 'Covid' that anyone who tested positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' and died of any other cause within 28 days and even longer 'Covid-19' had to go on the death certificate. Cases have come from the test that can't test for infectious disease and the deaths are those who have died of *anything* after testing positive with a test not testing for the 'virus'. I'll have much more later about the death certificate scandal.

Mullis was deeply dismissive of the now US 'Covid' star Anthony Fauci who he said was a liar who didn't know anything about anything – 'and I would say that to his face – nothing.' He said of Fauci: 'The man thinks he can take a blood sample, put it in an electron microscope and if it's got a virus in there you'll know it – he doesn't understand electron microscopy and he doesn't understand medicine and shouldn't be in a position like he's in.' That position, terrifyingly, has made him the decider of 'Covid' fascism policy on behalf of the Cult in his role as director since 1984 of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) while his record of being wrong is laughable; but being wrong, so long as it's the *right kind* of wrong, is why the Cult loves him. He'll say anything the Cult tells him to say. Fauci was made Chief Medical Adviser to the President immediately Biden took office. Biden was installed in the White House by Cult manipulation and one of his first decisions was to elevate Fauci to a position of even more control. This is a coincidence? Yes, and I identify as a flamenco dancer called Lola. How does such an incompetent criminal like Fauci remain in that

pivotal position in American health since *the 1980s*? When you serve the Cult it looks after you until you are surplus to requirements. Kary Mullis said prophetically of Fauci and his like: 'Those guys have an agenda and it's not an agenda we would like them to have ... they make their own rules, they change them when they want to, and Tony Fauci does not mind going on television in front of the people who pay his salary and lie directly into the camera.' Fauci has done that almost daily since the 'Covid' hoax began. Lying is in Fauci's DNA. To make the situation crystal clear about the PCR test this is a direct quote from its inventor Kary Mullis:

It [the PCR test] doesn't tell you that you're sick and doesn't tell you that the thing you ended up with was really going to hurt you ...'

Ask yourself why governments and medical systems the world over have been using this very test to decide who is 'infected' with the SARS-CoV-2 'virus' and the alleged disease it allegedly causes, 'Covid-19'. The answer to that question will tell you what has been going on. By the way, here's a little show-stopper – the 'new' SARS-CoV-2 'virus' was 'identified' as such right from the start using ... *the PCR test not testing for the 'virus'*. If you are new to this and find that shocking then stick around. I have hardly started yet. Even worse, other 'tests', like the 'Lateral Flow Device' (LFD), are considered so useless that they have to be *confirmed* by the PCR test! Leaked emails written by Ben Dyson, adviser to UK 'Health' Secretary Matt Hancock, said they were 'dangerously unreliable'. Dyson, executive director of strategy at the Department of Health, wrote: 'As of today, someone who gets a positive LFD result in (say) London has at best a 25 per cent chance of it being a true positive, but if it is a self-reported test potentially as low as 10 per cent (on an optimistic assumption about specificity) or as low as 2 per cent (on a more pessimistic assumption).' These are the 'tests' that schoolchildren and the public are being urged to have twice a week or more and have to isolate if they get a positive. Each fake positive goes in the statistics as a 'case' no matter how ludicrously inaccurate and the

'cases' drive lockdown, masks and the pressure to 'vaccinate'. The government said in response to the email leak that the 'tests' were accurate which confirmed yet again what shocking bloody liars they are. The real false positive rate is *100 percent* as we'll see. In another 'you couldn't make it up' the UK government agreed to pay £2.8 billion to California's Innova Medical Group to supply the irrelevant lateral flow tests. The company's primary test-making centre is in China. Innova Medical Group, established in March, 2020, is owned by Pasaca Capital Inc, chaired by Chinese-American millionaire Charles Huang who was born in Wuhan.

How it works – and how it doesn't

The RT-PCR test, known by its full title of Polymerase chain reaction, is used across the world to make millions, even billions, of copies of a DNA/RNA genetic information sample. The process is called 'amplification' and means that a tiny sample of genetic material is amplified to bring out the detailed content. I stress that it is not testing for an infectious disease. It is simply amplifying a sample of genetic material. In the words of Kary Mullis: 'PCR is ... just a process that's used to make a whole lot of something out of something.' To emphasise the point companies that make the PCR tests circulated around the world to 'test' for 'Covid' warn on the box that it can't be used to detect 'Covid' or infectious disease and is for research purposes only. It's okay, rest for a minute and you'll be fine. This is the test that produces the 'cases' and 'deaths' that have been used to destroy human society. All those global and national medical and scientific 'experts' demanding this destruction to 'save us' *KNOW* that the test is not testing for the 'virus' and the cases and deaths they claim to be real are an almost unimaginable fraud. Every one of them and so many others including politicians and psychopaths like Gates and Tedros must be brought before Nuremburg-type trials and jailed for the rest of their lives. The more the genetic sample is amplified by PCR the more elements of that material become sensitive to the test and by that I don't mean sensitive for a 'virus' but for elements of the genetic material which

is *naturally* in the body or relates to remnants of old conditions of various kinds lying dormant and causing no disease. Once the amplification of the PCR reaches a certain level *everyone* will test positive. So much of the material has been made sensitive to the test that everyone will have some part of it in their body. Even lying criminals like Fauci have said that once PCR amplifications pass 35 cycles everything will be a false positive that cannot be trusted for the reasons I have described. I say, like many proper doctors and scientists, that 100 percent of the 'positives' are false, but let's just go with Fauci for a moment.

He says that any amplification over 35 cycles will produce false positives and yet the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have recommended up to 40 *cycles* and the National Health Service (NHS) in Britain admitted in an internal document for staff that it was using 45 *cycles* of amplification. A long list of other countries has been doing the same and at least one 'testing' laboratory has been using 50 *cycles*. Have you ever heard a doctor, medical 'expert' or the media ask what level of amplification has been used to claim a 'positive'. The 'test' comes back 'positive' and so you have the 'virus', end of story. Now we can see how the government in Tanzania could send off samples from a goat and a pawpaw fruit under human names and both came back positive for 'Covid-19'. Tanzania president John Magufuli mocked the 'Covid' hysteria, the PCR test and masks and refused to import the DNA-manipulating 'vaccine'. The Cult hated him and an article sponsored by the Bill Gates Foundation appeared in the London *Guardian* in February, 2021, headed 'It's time for Africa to rein in Tanzania's anti-vaxxer president'. Well, 'reined in' he shortly was. Magufuli appeared in good health, but then, in March, 2021, he was dead at 61 from 'heart failure'. He was replaced by Samia Hassan Suhulu who is connected to Klaus Schwab's World Economic Forum and she immediately reversed Magufuli's 'Covid' policy. A sample of cola tested positive for 'Covid' with the PCR test in Germany while American actress and singer-songwriter Erykah Badu tested positive in one nostril and negative in the other. Footballer Ronaldo called

the PCR test 'bullshit' after testing positive three times and being forced to quarantine and miss matches when there was nothing wrong with him. The mantra from Tedros at the World Health Organization and national governments (same thing) has been test, test, test. They know that the more tests they can generate the more fake 'cases' they have which go on to become 'deaths' in ways I am coming to. The UK government has its Operation Moonshot planned to test multiple millions every day in workplaces and schools with free tests for everyone to use twice a week at home in line with the Cult plan from the start to make testing part of life. A government advertisement for an 'Interim Head of Asymptomatic Testing Communication' said the job included responsibility for delivering a 'communications strategy' (propaganda) 'to support the expansion of asymptomatic testing that *'normalises testing as part of everyday life'*'. More tests means more fake 'cases', 'deaths' and fascism. I have heard of, and from, many people who booked a test, couldn't turn up, and yet got a positive result through the post for a test they'd never even had. The whole thing is crazy, but for the Cult there's method in the madness. Controlling and manipulating the level of amplification of the test means the authorities can control whenever they want the number of apparent 'cases' and 'deaths'. If they want to justify more fascist lockdown and destruction of livelihoods they keep the amplification high. If they want to give the illusion that lockdowns and the 'vaccine' are working then they lower the amplification and 'cases' and 'deaths' will appear to fall. In January, 2021, the Cult-owned World Health Organization suddenly warned laboratories about over-amplification of the test and to lower the threshold. Suddenly headlines began appearing such as: 'Why ARE "Covid" cases plummeting?' This was just when the vaccine rollout was underway and I had predicted months before they would make cases appear to fall through amplification tampering when the 'vaccine' came. These people are so predictable.

Cow vaccines?

The question must be asked of what is on the test swabs being poked far up the nose of the population to the base of the brain? A nasal swab punctured one woman's brain and caused it to leak fluid. Most of these procedures are being done by people with little training or medical knowledge. Dr Lorraine Day, former orthopaedic trauma surgeon and Chief of Orthopaedic Surgery at San Francisco General Hospital, says the tests are really a '*vaccine*'. Cows have long been vaccinated this way. She points out that masks have to cover the nose and the mouth where it is claimed the '*virus*' exists in saliva. Why then don't they take saliva from the mouth as they do with a DNA test instead of pushing a long swab up the nose towards the brain? The ethmoid bone separates the nasal cavity from the brain and within that bone is the cribriform plate. Dr Day says that when the swab is pushed up against this plate and twisted the procedure is '*depositing things back there*'. She claims that among these '*things*' are nanoparticles that can enter the brain. Researchers have noted that a team at the Gates-funded Johns Hopkins have designed tiny, star-shaped micro-devices that can latch onto intestinal mucosa and release drugs into the body. Mucosa is the thin skin that covers the inside surface of parts of the body such as *the nose* and mouth and produces mucus to protect them. The Johns Hopkins micro-devices are called '*theragrippers*' and were '*inspired*' by a parasitic worm that digs its sharp teeth into a host's intestines. Nasal swabs are also coated in the sterilisation agent ethylene oxide. The US National Cancer Institute posts this explanation on its website:

At room temperature, ethylene oxide is a flammable colorless gas with a sweet odor. It is used primarily to produce other chemicals, including antifreeze. In smaller amounts, ethylene oxide is used as a pesticide and a sterilizing agent. The ability of ethylene oxide to damage DNA makes it an effective sterilizing agent but also accounts for its cancer-causing activity.

The Institute mentions lymphoma and leukaemia as cancers most frequently reported to be associated with occupational exposure to ethylene oxide along with stomach and breast cancers. How does anyone think this is going to work out with the constant testing

regime being inflicted on adults and children at home and at school that will accumulate in the body anything that's on the swab?

Doctors know best

It is vital for people to realise that 'hero' doctors 'know' only what the Big Pharma-dominated medical authorities tell them to 'know' and if they refuse to 'know' what they are told to 'know' they are out the door. They are mostly not physicians or healers, but repeaters of the official narrative – or else. I have seen alleged professional doctors on British television make shocking statements that we are supposed to take seriously. One called 'Dr' Amir Khan, who is actually telling patients how to respond to illness, said that men could take the birth pill to 'help slow down the effects of Covid-19'. In March, 2021, another ridiculous 'Covid study' by an American doctor proposed injecting men with the female sex hormone progesterone as a 'Covid' treatment. British doctor Nighat Arif told the BBC that face coverings were now going to be part of ongoing normal. Yes, the vaccine protects you, she said (evidence?) ... but the way to deal with viruses in the community was always going to come down to hand washing, face covering and keeping a physical distance. That's not what we were told before the 'vaccine' was circulating. Arif said she couldn't imagine ever again going on the underground or in a lift without a mask. I was just thanking my good luck that she was not my doctor when she said – in March, 2021 – that if 'we are *behaving* and we are doing all the right things' she thought we could 'have our nearest and dearest around us at home ... around *Christmas* and *New Year*! Her patronising delivery was the usual school teacher talking to six-year-olds as she repeated every government talking point and probably believed them all. If we have learned anything from the 'Covid' experience surely it must be that humanity's perception of doctors needs a fundamental rethink. NHS 'doctor' Sara Kayat told her television audience that the 'Covid vaccine' would '100 percent prevent hospitalisation and death'. Not even Big Pharma claimed that. We have to stop taking 'experts' at their word without question when so many of them are

clueless and only repeating the party line on which their careers depend. That is not to say there are not brilliant doctors – there are and I have spoken to many of them since all this began – but you won't see them in the mainstream media or quoted by the psychopaths and yes-people in government.

Remember the name – Christian Drosten

German virologist Christian Drosten, Director of Charité Institute of Virology in Berlin, became a national star after the pandemic hoax began. He was feted on television and advised the German government on 'Covid' policy. Most importantly to the wider world Drosten led a group that produced the 'Covid' testing protocol for the PCR test. What a remarkable feat given the PCR cannot test for infectious disease and even more so when you think that Drosten said that his method of testing for SARS-CoV-2 was developed 'without having virus material available'. *He developed a test for a 'virus' that he didn't have and had never seen.* Let that sink in as you survey the global devastation that came from what he did. The whole catastrophe of Drosten's 'test' was based on the alleged genetic sequence published by Chinese scientists on the Internet. We will see in the next chapter that this alleged 'genetic sequence' has never been produced by China or anyone and cannot be when there *is no* SARS-CoV-2. Drosten, however, doesn't seem to let little details like that get in the way. He was the lead author with Victor Corman from the same Charité Hospital of the paper 'Detection of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) by real-time PCR' published in a magazine called *Eurosurveillance*. This became known as the Corman-Drosten paper. In November, 2020, with human society devastated by the effects of the Corman-Drosten test baloney, the protocol was publicly challenged by 22 international scientists and independent researchers from Europe, the United States, and Japan. Among them were senior molecular geneticists, biochemists, immunologists, and microbiologists. They produced a document headed 'External peer review of the RTPCR test to detect SARS-Cov-2 Reveals 10 Major Flaws At The Molecular and Methodological Level: Consequences

For False-Positive Results'. The flaws in the Corman-Drosten test included the following:

- The test is non-specific because of erroneous design
- Results are enormously variable
- The test is unable to discriminate between the whole 'virus' and viral fragments
- It doesn't have positive or negative controls
- The test lacks a standard operating procedure
- It is unsupported by proper peer view

The scientists said the PCR 'Covid' testing protocol was not founded on science and they demanded the Corman-Drosten paper be retracted by *Eurosurveillance*. They said all present and previous Covid deaths, cases, and 'infection rates' should be subject to a massive retroactive inquiry. Lockdowns and travel restrictions should be reviewed and relaxed and those diagnosed through PCR to have 'Covid-19' should not be forced to isolate. Dr Kevin Corbett, a health researcher and nurse educator with a long academic career producing a stream of peer-reviewed publications at many UK universities, made the same point about the PCR test debacle. He said of the scientists' conclusions: 'Every scientific rationale for the development of that test has been totally destroyed by this paper. It's like Hiroshima/Nagasaki to the Covid test.' He said that China hadn't given them an isolated 'virus' when Drosten developed the test. Instead they had developed the test from *a sequence in a gene bank*.' Put another way ... *they made it up!* The scientists were supported in this contention by a Portuguese appeals court which ruled in November, 2020, that PCR tests are unreliable and it is unlawful to quarantine people based solely on a PCR test. The point about China not providing an isolated virus must be true when the 'virus' has never been isolated to this day and the consequences of that will become clear. Drosten and company produced this useless 'protocol' right on cue in January, 2020, just as the 'virus' was said to

be moving westward and it somehow managed to successfully pass a peer-review in 24 hours. In other words there was no peer-review for a test that would be used to decide who had 'Covid' and who didn't across the world. The Cult-created, Gates-controlled World Health Organization immediately recommended all its nearly 200 member countries to use the Drosten PCR protocol to detect 'cases' and 'deaths'. The sting was underway and it continues to this day.

So who is this Christian Drosten that produced the means through which death, destruction and economic catastrophe would be justified? His education background, including his doctoral thesis, would appear to be somewhat shrouded in mystery and his track record is dire as with another essential player in the 'Covid' hoax, the Gates-funded Professor Neil Ferguson at the Gates-funded Imperial College in London of whom more shortly. Drosten predicted in 2003 that the alleged original SARS 'virus' (SARS-1) was an epidemic that could have serious effects on economies and an effective vaccine would take at least two years to produce. Drosten's answer to every alleged 'outbreak' is a vaccine which you won't be shocked to know. What followed were just 774 official deaths worldwide and none in Germany where there were only nine cases. That is even if you believe there ever was a SARS 'virus' when the evidence is zilch and I will expand on this in the next chapter. Drosten claims to be co-discoverer of 'SARS-1' and developed a test for it in 2003. He was screaming warnings about 'swine flu' in 2009 and how it was a widespread infection far more severe than any dangers from a vaccine could be and people should get vaccinated. It would be helpful for Drosten's vocal chords if he simply recorded the words 'the virus is deadly and you need to get vaccinated' and copies could be handed out whenever the latest made-up threat comes along. Drosten's swine flu epidemic never happened, but Big Pharma didn't mind with governments spending hundreds of millions on vaccines that hardly anyone bothered to use and many who did wished they hadn't. A study in 2010 revealed that the risk of dying from swine flu, or H1N1, was no higher than that of the annual seasonal flu which is what at least most of 'it' really was as in

the case of 'Covid-19'. A media investigation into Drosten asked how with such a record of inaccuracy he could be *the* government adviser on these issues. The answer to that question is the same with Drosten, Ferguson and Fauci – they keep on giving the authorities the 'conclusions' and 'advice' they want to hear. Drosten certainly produced the goods for them in January, 2020, with his PCR protocol garbage and provided the foundation of what German internal medicine specialist Dr Claus Köhnlein, co-author of *Virus Mania*, called the 'test pandemic'. The 22 scientists in the *Eurosurveillance* challenge called out conflicts of interest within the Drosten 'protocol' group and with good reason. Olfert Landt, a regular co-author of Drosten 'studies', owns the biotech company TIB Molbiol Syntheselabor GmbH in Berlin which manufactures and sells the tests that Drosten and his mates come up with. They have done this with SARS, Enterotoxigenic E. coli (ETEC), MERS, Zika 'virus', yellow fever, and now 'Covid'. Landt told the *Berliner Zeitung* newspaper:

The testing, design and development came from the Charité [Drosten and Corman]. We simply implemented it immediately in the form of a kit. And if we don't have the virus, which originally only existed in Wuhan, we can make a synthetic gene to simulate the genome of the virus. That's what we did very quickly.

This is more confirmation that the Drosten test was designed without access to the 'virus' and only a synthetic simulation which is what SARS-CoV-2 really is – a computer-generated synthetic fiction. It's quite an enterprise they have going here. A Drosten team decides what the test for something should be and Landt's biotech company flogs it to governments and medical systems across the world. His company must have made an absolute fortune since the 'Covid' hoax began. Dr Reiner Fuellmich, a prominent German consumer protection trial lawyer in Germany and California, is on Drosten's case and that of Tedros at the World Health Organization for crimes against humanity with a class-action lawsuit being prepared in the United States and other legal action in Germany.

Why China?

Scamming the world with a 'virus' that doesn't exist would seem impossible on the face of it, but not if you have control of the relatively few people that make policy decisions and the great majority of the global media. Remember it's not about changing 'real' reality it's about controlling *perception* of reality. You don't have to make something happen you only have to make people *believe* that it's happening. Renegade Minds understand this and are therefore much harder to swindle. 'Covid-19' is not a 'real' 'virus'. It's a mind virus, like a computer virus, which has infected the minds, not the bodies, of billions. It all started, publically at least, in China and that alone is of central significance. The Cult was behind the revolution led by its asset Mao Zedong, or Chairman Mao, which established the People's Republic of China on October 1st, 1949. It should have been called The Cult's Republic of China, but the name had to reflect the recurring illusion that vicious dictatorships are run by and for the people (see all the 'Democratic Republics' controlled by tyrants). In the same way we have the 'Biden' Democratic Republic of America officially ruled by a puppet tyrant (at least temporarily) on behalf of Cult tyrants. The creation of Mao's merciless communist/fascist dictatorship was part of a frenzy of activity by the Cult at the conclusion of World War Two which, like the First World War, it had instigated through its assets in Germany, Britain, France, the United States and elsewhere. Israel was formed in 1948; the Soviet Union expanded its 'Iron Curtain' control, influence and military power with the Warsaw Pact communist alliance in 1955; the United Nations was formed in 1945 as a Cult precursor to world government; and a long list of world bodies would be established including the World Health Organization (1948), World Trade Organization (1948 under another name until 1995), International Monetary Fund (1945) and World Bank (1944). Human society was redrawn and hugely centralised in the global Problem-Reaction-Solution that was World War Two. All these changes were significant. Israel would become the headquarters of the Sabbatians

and the revolution in China would prepare the ground and control system for the events of 2019/2020.

Renegade Minds know there are no borders except for public consumption. The Cult is a seamless, borderless global entity and to understand the game we need to put aside labels like borders, nations, countries, communism, fascism and democracy. These delude the population into believing that countries are ruled within their borders by a government of whatever shade when these are mere agencies of a global power. America's illusion of democracy and China's communism/fascism are subsidiaries – vehicles – for the same agenda. We may hear about conflict and competition between America and China and on the lower levels that will be true; but at the Cult level they are branches of the same company in the way of the McDonald's example I gave earlier. I have tracked in the books over the years support by US governments of both parties for Chinese Communist Party infiltration of American society through allowing the sale of land, even military facilities, and the acquisition of American business and university influence. All this is underpinned by the infamous stealing of intellectual property and technological know-how. Cult-owned Silicon Valley corporations waive their fraudulent 'morality' to do business with human-rights-free China; Cult-controlled Disney has become China's PR department; and China in effect owns 'American' sports such as basketball which depends for much of its income on Chinese audiences. As a result any sports player, coach or official speaking out against China's horrific human rights record is immediately condemned or fired by the China-worshipping National Basketball Association. One of the first acts of China-controlled Biden was to issue an executive order telling federal agencies to stop making references to the 'virus' by the 'geographic location of its origin'. Long-time Congressman Jerry Nadler warned that criticising China, America's biggest rival, leads to hate crimes against Asian people in the United States. So shut up you bigot. China is fast closing in on Israel as a country that must not be criticised which is apt, really, given that Sabbatians control them both. The two countries have

developed close economic, military, technological and strategic ties which include involvement in China's 'Silk Road' transport and economic initiative to connect China with Europe. Israel was the first country in the Middle East to recognise the establishment of Mao's tyranny in 1950 months after it was established.

Project Wuhan – the 'Covid' Psyop

I emphasise again that the Cult plays the long game and what is happening to the world today is the result of centuries of calculated manipulation following a script to take control step-by-step of every aspect of human society. I will discuss later the common force behind all this that has spanned those centuries and thousands of years if the truth be told. Instigating the Mao revolution in China in 1949 with a 2020 'pandemic' in mind is not only how they work – the 71 years between them is really quite short by the Cult's standards of manipulation preparation. The reason for the Cult's Chinese revolution was to create a fiercely-controlled environment within which an extreme structure for human control could be incubated to eventually be unleashed across the world. We have seen this happen since the 'pandemic' emerged from China with the Chinese control-structure founded on AI technology and tyrannical enforcement sweep across the West. Until the moment when the Cult went for broke in the West and put its fascism on public display Western governments had to pay some lip-service to freedom and democracy to not alert too many people to the tyranny-in-the-making. Freedoms were more subtly eroded and power centralised with covert government structures put in place waiting for the arrival of 2020 when that smokescreen of 'freedom' could be dispensed with. The West was not able to move towards tyranny before 2020 anything like as fast as China which was created as a tyranny and had no limits on how fast it could construct the Cult's blueprint for global control. When the time came to impose that structure on the world it was the same Cult-owned Chinese communist/fascist government that provided the excuse – the 'Covid pandemic'. It was absolutely crucial to the Cult plan for the Chinese response to the 'pandemic' –

draconian lockdowns of the entire population – to become the blueprint that Western countries would follow to destroy the livelihoods and freedom of their people. This is why the Cult-owned, Gates-owned, WHO Director-General Tedros said early on:

The Chinese government is to be congratulated for the extraordinary measures it has taken to contain the outbreak. China is actually setting a new standard for outbreak response and it is not an exaggeration.

Forbes magazine said of China: ‘... those measures protected untold millions from getting the disease’. The Rockefeller Foundation ‘epidemic scenario’ document in 2010 said ‘prophetically’:

However, a few countries did fare better – China in particular. The Chinese government’s quick imposition and enforcement of mandatory quarantine for all citizens, as well as its instant and near-hermetic sealing off of all borders, saved millions of lives, stopping the spread of the virus far earlier than in other countries and enabling a swifter post-pandemic recovery.

Once again – *spooky*.

The first official story was the ‘bat theory’ or rather the bat diversion. The source of the ‘virus outbreak’ we were told was a ‘wet market’ in Wuhan where bats and other animals are bought and eaten in horrifically unhygienic conditions. Then another story emerged through the alternative media that the ‘virus’ had been released on purpose or by accident from a BSL-4 (biosafety level 4) laboratory in Wuhan not far from the wet market. The lab was reported to create and work with lethal concoctions and bioweapons. Biosafety level 4 is the highest in the World Health Organization system of safety and containment. Renegade Minds are aware of what I call designer manipulation. The ideal for the Cult is for people to buy its prime narrative which in the opening salvos of the ‘pandemic’ was the wet market story. It knows, however, that there is now a considerable worldwide alternative media of researchers sceptical of anything governments say and they are often given a version of events in a form they can perceive as credible while misdirecting them from the real truth. In this case let them

think that the conspiracy involved is a 'bioweapon virus' released from the Wuhan lab to keep them from the real conspiracy – *there is no 'virus'*. The WHO's current position on the source of the outbreak at the time of writing appears to be: 'We haven't got a clue, mate.' This is a good position to maintain mystery and bewilderment. The inner circle will know where the 'virus' came from – *nowhere*. The bottom line was to ensure the public believed there *was* a 'virus' and it didn't much matter if they thought it was natural or had been released from a lab. The belief that there was a 'deadly virus' was all that was needed to trigger global panic and fear. The population was terrified into handing their power to authority and doing what they were told. They had to or they were 'all gonna die'.

In March, 2020, information began to come my way from real doctors and scientists and my own additional research which had my intuition screaming: 'Yes, that's it! *There is no virus.*' The 'bioweapon' was not the 'virus'; it was the '*vaccine*' already being talked about that would be the bioweapon. My conclusion was further enhanced by happenings in Wuhan. The 'virus' was said to be sweeping the city and news footage circulated of people collapsing in the street (which they've never done in the West with the same 'virus'). The Chinese government was building 'new hospitals' in a matter of ten days to 'cope with demand' such was the virulent nature of the 'virus'. Yet in what seemed like no time the 'new hospitals' closed – even if they even opened – and China declared itself 'virus-free'. It was back to business as usual. This was more propaganda to promote the Chinese draconian lockdowns in the West as the way to 'beat the virus'. Trouble was that we subsequently had lockdown after lockdown, but never business as usual. As the people of the West and most of the rest of the world were caught in an ever-worsening spiral of lockdown, social distancing, masks, isolated old people, families forced apart, and livelihood destruction, it was party-time in Wuhan. Pictures emerged of thousands of people enjoying pool parties and concerts. It made no sense until you realised there never was a 'virus' and the

whole thing was a Cult set-up to transform human society out of one of its major global strongholds – China.

How is it possible to deceive virtually the entire world population into believing there is a deadly virus when there is not even a 'virus' let alone a deadly one? It's nothing like as difficult as you would think and that's clearly true because it happened.

Postscript: See end of book Postscript for more on the 'Wuhan lab virus release' story which the authorities and media were pushing heavily in the summer of 2021 to divert attention from the truth that the 'Covid virus' is pure invention.

CHAPTER FIVE

There is no 'virus'

You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time
Abraham Lincoln

The greatest form of mind control is repetition. The more you repeat the same mantra of alleged 'facts' the more will accept them to be true. It becomes an 'everyone knows that, mate'. If you can also censor any other version or alternative to your alleged 'facts' you are pretty much home and cooking.

By the start of 2020 the Cult owned the global mainstream media almost in its entirety to spew out its 'Covid' propaganda and ignore or discredit any other information and view. Cult-owned social media platforms in Cult-owned Silicon Valley were poised and ready to unleash a campaign of ferocious censorship to obliterate all but the official narrative. To complete the circle many demands for censorship by Silicon Valley were led by the mainstream media as 'journalists' became full-out enforcers for the Cult both as propagandists and censors. Part of this has been the influx of young people straight out of university who have become 'journalists' in significant positions. They have no experience and a headful of programmed perceptions from their years at school and university at a time when today's young are the most perceptually-targeted generations in known human history given the insidious impact of technology. They enter the media perceptually prepared and ready to repeat the narratives of the system that programmed them to

repeat its narratives. The BBC has a truly pathetic 'specialist disinformation reporter' called Marianna Spring who fits this bill perfectly. She is clueless about the world, how it works and what is really going on. Her role is to discredit anyone doing the job that a proper journalist would do and system-serving hacks like Spring wouldn't dare to do or even see the need to do. They are too busy licking the arse of authority which can never be wrong and, in the case of the BBC propaganda programme, *Panorama*, contacting payments systems such as PayPal to have a donations page taken down for a film company making documentaries questioning vaccines. Even the BBC soap opera *EastEnders* included a disgracefully biased scene in which an inarticulate white working class woman was made to look foolish for questioning the 'vaccine' while a well-spoken black man and Asian woman promoted the government narrative. It ticked every BBC box and the fact that the black and minority community was resisting the 'vaccine' had nothing to do with the way the scene was written. The BBC has become a disgusting tyrannical propaganda and censorship operation that should be defunded and disbanded and a free media take its place with a brief to stop censorship instead of demanding it. A BBC 'interview' with Gates goes something like: 'Mr Gates, sir, if I can call you sir, would you like to tell our audience why you are such a great man, a wonderful humanitarian philanthropist, and why you should absolutely be allowed as a software salesman to decide health policy for approaching eight billion people? Thank you, sir, please sir.' Propaganda programming has been incessant and merciless and when all you hear is the same story from the media, repeated by those around you who have only heard the same story, is it any wonder that people on a grand scale believe absolute mendacious garbage to be true? You are about to see, too, why this level of information control is necessary when the official 'Covid' narrative is so nonsensical and unsupportable by the evidence.

Structure of Deceit

The pyramid structure through which the 'Covid' hoax has been manifested is very simple and has to be to work. As few people as possible have to be involved with full knowledge of what they are doing – and why – or the real story would get out. At the top of the pyramid are the inner core of the Cult which controls Bill Gates who, in turn, controls the World Health Organization through his pivotal funding and his puppet Director-General mouthpiece, Tedros. Before he was appointed Tedros was chair of the Gates-founded Global Fund to 'fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria', a board member of the Gates-funded 'vaccine alliance' GAVI, and on the board of another Gates-funded organisation. Gates owns him and picked him for a specific reason – Tedros is a crook and worse. 'Dr' Tedros (he's not a medical doctor, the first WHO chief not to be) was a member of the tyrannical Marxist government of Ethiopia for decades with all its human rights abuses. He has faced allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds and was exposed three times for covering up cholera epidemics while Ethiopia's health minister. Tedros appointed the mass-murdering genocidal Zimbabwe dictator Robert Mugabe as a WHO goodwill ambassador for public health which, as with Tedros, is like appointing a psychopath to run a peace and love campaign. The move was so ridiculous that he had to drop Mugabe in the face of widespread condemnation. American economist David Steinman, a Nobel peace prize nominee, lodged a complaint with the International Criminal Court in The Hague over alleged genocide by Tedros when he was Ethiopia's foreign minister. Steinman says Tedros was a 'crucial decision maker' who directed the actions of Ethiopia's security forces from 2013 to 2015 and one of three officials in charge when those security services embarked on the 'killing' and 'torturing' of Ethiopians. You can see where Tedros is coming from and it's sobering to think that he has been the vehicle for Gates and the Cult to direct the global response to 'Covid'. Think about that. A psychopathic Cult dictates to psychopath Gates who dictates to psychopath Tedros who dictates how countries of the world must respond to a 'Covid virus' never scientifically shown to exist. At the same time psychopathic Cult-owned Silicon Valley information

giants like Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter announced very early on that they would give the Cult/Gates/Tedros/WHO version of the narrative free advertising and censor those who challenged their intelligence-insulting, mendacious story.

The next layer in the global 'medical' structure below the Cult, Gates and Tedros are the chief medical officers and science 'advisers' in each of the WHO member countries which means virtually all of them. Medical officers and arbiters of science (they're not) then take the WHO policy and recommended responses and impose them on their country's population while the political 'leaders' say they are deciding policy (they're clearly not) by 'following the science' on the advice of the 'experts' – the same medical officers and science 'advisers' (dictators). In this way with the rarest of exceptions the entire world followed the same policy of lockdown, people distancing, masks and 'vaccines' dictated by the psychopathic Cult, psychopathic Gates and psychopathic Tedros who we are supposed to believe give a damn about the health of the world population they are seeking to enslave. That, amazingly, is all there is to it in terms of crucial decision-making. Medical staff in each country then follow like sheep the dictates of the shepherds at the top of the national medical hierarchies – chief medical officers and science 'advisers' who themselves follow like sheep the shepherds of the World Health Organization and the Cult. Shepherds at the national level often have major funding and other connections to Gates and his Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which carefully hands out money like confetti at a wedding to control the entire global medical system from the WHO down.

Follow the money

Christopher Whitty, Chief Medical Adviser to the UK Government at the centre of 'virus' policy, a senior adviser to the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), and Executive Board member of the World Health Organization, was gifted a grant of \$40 million by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for malaria research in Africa. The BBC described the unelected Whitty as 'the

official who will probably have the greatest impact on our everyday lives of any individual policymaker in modern times' and so it turned out. What Gates and Tedros have said Whitty has done like his equivalents around the world. Patrick Vallance, co-chair of SAGE and the government's Chief Scientific Adviser, is a former executive of Big Pharma giant GlaxoSmithKline with its fundamental financial and business connections to Bill Gates. In September, 2020, it was revealed that Vallance owned a deferred bonus of shares in GlaxoSmithKline worth £600,000 while the company was 'developing' a 'Covid vaccine'. Move along now – nothing to see here – what could possibly be wrong with that? Imperial College in London, a major player in 'Covid' policy in Britain and elsewhere with its 'Covid-19' Response Team, is funded by Gates and has big connections to China while the now infamous Professor Neil Ferguson, the useless 'computer modeller' at Imperial College is also funded by Gates. Ferguson delivered the dramatically inaccurate excuse for the first lockdowns (much more in the next chapter). The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in the United States, another source of outrageously false 'Covid' computer models to justify lockdowns, is bankrolled by Gates who is a vehement promotor of lockdowns. America's version of Whitty and Vallance, the again now infamous Anthony Fauci, has connections to 'Covid vaccine' maker Moderna as does Bill Gates through funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Fauci is director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), a major recipient of Gates money, and they are very close. Deborah Birx who was appointed White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator in February, 2020, is yet another with ties to Gates. Everywhere you look at the different elements around the world behind the coordination and decision making of the 'Covid' hoax there is Bill Gates and his money. They include the World Health Organization; Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States; National Institutes of Health (NIH) of Anthony Fauci; Imperial College and Neil Ferguson; the London School of Hygiene where Chris Whitty worked; Regulatory agencies like the UK Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

which gave emergency approval for 'Covid vaccines'; Wellcome Trust; GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI); Johns Hopkins University which has compiled the false 'Covid' figures; and the World Economic Forum. A [Nationalfile.com](https://www.nationalfile.com) article said:

Gates has a lot of pull in the medical world, he has a multi-million dollar relationship with Dr. Fauci, and Fauci originally took the Gates line supporting vaccines and casting doubt on [the drug hydroxychloroquine]. Coronavirus response team member Dr. Deborah Birx, appointed by former president Obama to serve as United States Global AIDS Coordinator, also sits on the board of a group that has received billions from Gates' foundation, and Birx reportedly used a disputed Bill Gates-funded model for the White House's Coronavirus effort. Gates is a big proponent for a population lockdown scenario for the Coronavirus outbreak.

Another funder of Moderna is the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the technology-development arm of the Pentagon and one of the most sinister organisations on earth. DARPA had a major role with the CIA covert technology-funding operation In-Q-Tel in the development of Google and social media which is now at the centre of global censorship. Fauci and Gates are extremely close and openly admit to talking regularly about 'Covid' policy, but then why wouldn't Gates have a seat at every national 'Covid' table after his Foundation committed \$1.75 billion to the 'fight against Covid-19'. When passed through our Orwellian Translation Unit this means that he has bought and paid for the Cult-driven 'Covid' response worldwide. Research the major 'Covid' response personnel in your own country and you will find the same Gates funding and other connections again and again. Medical and science chiefs following World Health Organization 'policy' sit atop a medical hierarchy in their country of administrators, doctors and nursing staff. These 'subordinates' are told they must work and behave in accordance with the policy delivered from the 'top' of the national 'health' pyramid which is largely the policy delivered by the WHO which is the policy delivered by Gates and the Cult. The whole 'Covid' narrative has been imposed on medical staff by a climate of fear although great numbers don't even need that to comply. They do so through breathtaking levels of ignorance and

include doctors who go through life simply repeating what Big Pharma and their hierarchical masters tell them to say and believe. No wonder Big Pharma 'medicine' is one of the biggest killers on Planet Earth.

The same top-down system of intimidation operates with regard to the Cult Big Pharma cartel which also dictates policy through national and global medical systems in this way. The Cult and Big Pharma agendas are the same because the former controls and owns the latter. 'Health' administrators, doctors, and nursing staff are told to support and parrot the dictated policy or they will face consequences which can include being fired. How sad it's been to see medical staff meekly repeating and imposing Cult policy without question and most of those who can see through the deceit are only willing to speak anonymously off the record. They know what will happen if their identity is known. This has left the courageous few to expose the lies about the 'virus', face masks, overwhelmed hospitals that aren't, and the dangers of the 'vaccine' that isn't a vaccine. When these medical professionals and scientists, some renowned in their field, have taken to the Internet to expose the truth their articles, comments and videos have been deleted by Cult-owned Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. What a real head-shaker to see YouTube videos with leading world scientists and highly qualified medical specialists with an added link underneath to the notorious Cult propaganda website *Wikipedia* to find the 'facts' about the same subject.

HIV – the 'Covid' trial-run

I'll give you an example of the consequences for health and truth that come from censorship and unquestioning belief in official narratives. The story was told by PCR inventor Kary Mullis in his book *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field*. He said that in 1984 he accepted as just another scientific fact that Luc Montagnier of France's Pasteur Institute and Robert Gallo of America's National Institutes of Health had independently discovered that a 'retrovirus' dubbed HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) caused AIDS. They

were, after all, Mullis writes, specialists in retroviruses. This is how the medical and science pyramids work. Something is announced or *assumed* and then becomes an everybody-knows-that purely through repetition of the assumption as if it is fact. Complete crap becomes accepted truth with no supporting evidence and only repetition of the crap. This is how a 'virus' that doesn't exist became the 'virus' that changed the world. The HIV-AIDS fairy story became a multi-billion pound industry and the media poured out propaganda terrifying the world about the deadly HIV 'virus' that caused the lethal AIDS. By then Mullis was working at a lab in Santa Monica, California, to detect retroviruses with his PCR test in blood donations received by the Red Cross. In doing so he asked a virologist where he could find a reference for HIV being the cause of AIDS. 'You don't need a reference,' the virologist said ... '*Everybody knows it.*' Mullis said he wanted to quote a reference in the report he was doing and he said he felt a little funny about not knowing the source of such an important discovery when everyone else seemed to. The virologist suggested he cite a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on morbidity and mortality. Mullis read the report, but it only said that an organism had been identified and did not say how. The report did not identify the original scientific work. Physicians, however, *assumed* (key recurring theme) that if the CDC was convinced that HIV caused AIDS then proof must exist. Mullis continues:

I did computer searches. Neither Montagnier, Gallo, nor anyone else had published papers describing experiments which led to the conclusion that HIV probably caused AIDS. I read the papers in *Science* for which they had become well known as AIDS doctors, but all they had said there was that they had found evidence of a past infection by something which was probably HIV in some AIDS patients.

They found antibodies. Antibodies to viruses had always been considered evidence of past disease, not present disease. Antibodies signaled that the virus had been defeated. The patient had saved himself. There was no indication in these papers that this virus caused a disease. They didn't show that everybody with the antibodies had the disease. In fact they found some healthy people with antibodies.

Mullis asked why their work had been published if Montagnier and Gallo hadn't really found this evidence, and why had they been fighting so hard to get credit for the discovery? He says he was hesitant to write 'HIV is the probable cause of AIDS' until he found published evidence to support that. 'Tens of thousands of scientists and researchers were spending billions of dollars a year doing research based on this idea,' Mullis writes. 'The reason had to be there somewhere; otherwise these people would not have allowed their research to settle into one narrow channel of investigation.' He said he lectured about PCR at numerous meetings where people were always talking about HIV and he asked them how they knew that HIV was the cause of AIDS:

Everyone said something. Everyone had the answer at home, in the office, in some drawer. They all knew, and they would send me the papers as soon as they got back. But I never got any papers. Nobody ever sent me the news about how AIDS was caused by HIV.

Eventually Mullis was able to ask Montagnier himself about the reference proof when he lectured in San Diego at the grand opening of the University of California AIDS Research Center. Mullis says this was the last time he would ask his question without showing anger. Montagnier said he should reference the CDC report. 'I read it', Mullis said, and it didn't answer the question. 'If Montagnier didn't know the answer who the hell did?' Then one night Mullis was driving when an interview came on National Public Radio with Peter Duesberg, a prominent virologist at Berkeley and a California Scientist of the Year. Mullis says he finally understood why he could not find references that connected HIV to AIDS – *there weren't any!* No one had ever proved that HIV causes AIDS even though it had spawned a multi-billion pound global industry and the media was repeating this as fact every day in their articles and broadcasts terrifying the shit out of people about AIDS and giving the impression that a positive test for HIV (see 'Covid') was a death sentence. Duesberg was a threat to the AIDS gravy train and the agenda that underpinned it. He was therefore abused and castigated after he told the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

there was no good evidence implicating the new 'virus'. Editors rejected his manuscripts and his research funds were deleted. Mullis points out that the CDC has defined AIDS as one of more than 30 diseases *if accompanied* by a positive result on a test that detects antibodies to HIV; but those same diseases are not defined as AIDS cases when antibodies are not detected:

If an HIV-positive woman develops uterine cancer, for example, she is considered to have AIDS. If she is not HIV positive, she simply has uterine cancer. An HIV-positive man with tuberculosis has AIDS; if he tests negative he simply has tuberculosis. If he lives in Kenya or Colombia, where the test for HIV antibodies is too expensive, he is simply presumed to have the antibodies and therefore AIDS, and therefore he can be treated in the World Health Organization's clinic. It's the only medical help available in some places. And it's free, because the countries that support WHO are worried about AIDS.

Mullis accuses the CDC of continually adding new diseases (see ever more 'Covid symptoms') to the grand AIDS definition and of virtually doctoring the books to make it appear as if the disease continued to spread. He cites how in 1993 the CDC enormously broadened its AIDS definition and county health authorities were delighted because they received \$2,500 per year from the Federal government for every reported AIDS case. Ladies and gentlemen, I have just described, via Kary Mullis, the 'Covid pandemic' of 2020 and beyond. Every element is the same and it's been pulled off in the same way by the same networks.

The 'Covid virus' exists? Okay – prove it. Er ... still waiting

What Kary Mullis described with regard to 'HIV' has been repeated with 'Covid'. A claim is made that a new, or 'novel', infection has been found and the entire medical system of the world repeats that as fact exactly as they did with HIV and AIDS. No one in the mainstream asks rather relevant questions such as 'How do you know?' and 'Where is your proof?' The SARS-Cov-2 'virus' and the 'Covid-19 disease' became an overnight 'everybody-knows-that'. The origin could be debated and mulled over, but what you could not suggest was that 'SARS-Cov-2' didn't exist. That would be

ridiculous. 'Everybody knows' the 'virus' exists. Well, I didn't for one along with American proper doctors like Andrew Kaufman and Tom Cowan and long-time American proper journalist Jon Rappaport. We dared to pursue the obvious and simple question: 'Where's the evidence?' The overwhelming majority in medicine, journalism and the general public did not think to ask that. After all, *everyone knew* there was a new 'virus'. Everyone was saying so and I heard it on the BBC. Some would eventually argue that the 'deadly virus' was nothing like as deadly as claimed, but few would venture into the realms of its very existence. Had they done so they would have found that the evidence for that claim had gone AWOL as with HIV causes AIDS. In fact, not even that. For something to go AWOL it has to exist in the first place and scientific proof for a 'SARS-Cov-2' can be filed under nothing, nowhere and zilch.

Dr Andrew Kaufman is a board-certified forensic psychiatrist in New York State, a Doctor of Medicine and former Assistant Professor and Medical Director of Psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University, and Medical Instructor of Hematology and Oncology at the Medical School of South Carolina. He also studied biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and trained in Psychiatry at Duke University. Kaufman is retired from allopathic medicine, but remains a consultant and educator on natural healing. I saw a video of his very early on in the 'Covid' hoax in which he questioned claims about the 'virus' in the absence of any supporting evidence and with plenty pointing the other way. I did everything I could to circulate his work which I felt was asking the pivotal questions that needed an answer. I can recommend an excellent pull-together interview he did with the website The Last Vagabond entitled *Dr Andrew Kaufman: Virus Isolation, Terrain Theory and Covid-19* and his website is andrewkaufmanmd.com. Kaufman is not only a forensic psychiatrist; he is forensic in all that he does. He always reads original scientific papers, experiments and studies instead of second-third-fourth-hand reports about the 'virus' in the media which are repeating the repeated repetition of the narrative. When he did so with the original Chinese 'virus' papers Kaufman

realised that there was no evidence of a 'SARS-Cov-2'. They had never – from the start – shown it to exist and every repeat of this claim worldwide was based on the accepted existence of proof that was nowhere to be found – see Kary Mullis and HIV. Here we go again.

Let's postulate

Kaufman discovered that the Chinese authorities immediately concluded that the cause of an illness that broke out among about 200 initial patients in Wuhan was a 'new virus' when there were no grounds to make that conclusion. The alleged 'virus' was not isolated from other genetic material in their samples and then shown through a system known as Koch's postulates to be the causative agent of the illness. The world was told that the SARS-Cov-2 'virus' caused a disease they called 'Covid-19' which had 'flu-like' symptoms and could lead to respiratory problems and pneumonia. If it wasn't so tragic it would almost be funny. *'Flu-like' symptoms? Pneumonia? Respiratory disease?* What in *CHINA* and particularly in *Wuhan*, one of the most polluted cities in the world with a resulting epidemic of respiratory disease?? Three hundred thousand people get pneumonia in China every year and there are nearly a billion cases worldwide of 'flu-like symptoms'. These have a whole range of causes – including pollution in Wuhan – but no other possibility was credibly considered in late 2019 when the world was told there was a new and deadly 'virus'. The global prevalence of pneumonia and 'flu-like systems' gave the Cult networks unlimited potential to re-diagnose these other causes as the mythical 'Covid-19' and that is what they did from the very start. Kaufman revealed how Chinese medical and science authorities (all subordinates to the Cult-owned communist government) took genetic material from the lungs of only a few of the first patients. The material contained their own cells, bacteria, fungi and other microorganisms living in their bodies. The only way you could prove the existence of the 'virus' and its responsibility for the alleged 'Covid-19' was to isolate the virus from all the other material – a process also known as 'purification' – and

then follow the postulates sequence developed in the late 19th century by German physician and bacteriologist Robert Koch which became the 'gold standard' for connecting an alleged causation agent to a disease:

1. The microorganism (bacteria, fungus, virus, etc.) must be present in every case of the disease and all patients must have the same symptoms. It must also *not be present in healthy individuals*.
2. The microorganism must be isolated from the host with the disease. If the microorganism is a bacteria or fungus it must be grown in a pure culture. If it is a virus, it must be purified (i.e. containing no other material except the virus particles) from a clinical sample.
3. The specific disease, with all of its characteristics, must be reproduced when the infectious agent (the purified virus or a pure culture of bacteria or fungi) is inoculated into a healthy, susceptible host.
4. The microorganism must be recoverable from the experimentally infected host as in step 2.

Not one of these criteria has been met in the case of 'SARS-Cov-2' and 'Covid-19'. Not ONE. EVER. Robert Koch refers to bacteria and not viruses. What are called 'viral particles' are so minute (hence masks are useless by any definition) that they could only be seen after the invention of the electron microscope in the 1930s and can still only be observed through that means. American bacteriologist and virologist Thomas Milton Rivers, the so-called 'Father of Modern Virology' who was very significantly director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in the 1930s, developed a less stringent version of Koch's postulates to identify 'virus' causation known as 'Rivers criteria'. 'Covid' did not pass that process either. Some even doubt whether any 'virus' can be isolated from other particles containing genetic material in the Koch method. Freedom of Information requests in many countries asking for scientific proof that the 'Covid virus' has been purified and isolated and shown to exist have all come back with a 'we don't have that' and when this happened with a request to the UK Department of Health they added this comment:

However, outside of the scope of the [Freedom of Information Act] and on a discretionary basis, the following information has been advised to us, which may be of interest. Most infectious diseases are caused by viruses, bacteria or fungi. Some bacteria or fungi have the capacity to grow on their own in isolation, for example in colonies on a petri dish. Viruses are different in that they are what we call 'obligate pathogens' – that is, they cannot survive or reproduce without infecting a host ...

... For some diseases, it is possible to establish causation between a microorganism and a disease by isolating the pathogen from a patient, growing it in pure culture and reintroducing it to a healthy organism. These are known as 'Koch's postulates' and were developed in 1882. However, as our understanding of disease and different disease-causing agents has advanced, these are no longer the method for determining causation [Andrew Kaufman asks why in that case are there two published articles falsely claiming to satisfy Koch's postulates].

It has long been known that viral diseases cannot be identified in this way as viruses cannot be grown in 'pure culture'. When a patient is tested for a viral illness, this is normally done by looking for the presence of antigens, or viral genetic code in a host with molecular biology techniques [Kaufman asks how you could know the origin of these chemicals without having a pure culture for comparison].

For the record 'antigens' are defined so:

Invading microorganisms have antigens on their surface that the human body can recognise as being foreign – meaning not belonging to it. When the body recognises a foreign antigen, lymphocytes (white blood cells) produce antibodies, which are complementary in shape to the antigen.

Notwithstanding that this is open to question in relation to 'SARS-Cov-2' the presence of 'antibodies' can have many causes and they are found in people that are perfectly well. Kary Mullis said: 'Antibodies ... had always been considered evidence of past disease, not present disease.'

'Covid' really is a *computer* 'virus'

Where the UK Department of Health statement says 'viruses' are now 'diagnosed' through a 'viral genetic code in a host with molecular biology techniques', they mean ... *the PCR test* which its inventor said cannot test for infectious disease. They have no credible method of connecting a 'virus' to a disease and we will see that there is no scientific proof that any 'virus' causes any disease or there is any such thing as a 'virus' in the way that it is described. Tenacious Canadian researcher Christine Massey and her team made

some 40 Freedom of Information requests to national public health agencies in different countries asking for proof that SARS-CoV-2 has been isolated and not one of them could supply that information. Massey said of her request in Canada: 'Freedom of Information reveals Public Health Agency of Canada has no record of 'SARS-COV-2' isolation performed by anyone, anywhere, ever.' If you accept the comment from the UK Department of Health it's because they can't isolate a 'virus'. Even so many 'science' papers claimed to have isolated the 'Covid virus' until they were questioned and had to admit they hadn't. A reply from the Robert Koch Institute in Germany was typical: 'I am not aware of a paper which purified isolated SARS-CoV-2.' So what the hell was Christian Drosten and his gang using to design the 'Covid' testing protocol that has produced all the illusory Covid' cases and 'Covid' deaths when the head of the Chinese version of the CDC admitted there was a problem right from the start in that the 'virus' had never been isolated/purified? Breathe deeply: What they are calling 'Covid' is actually created by a *computer program* i.e. *they made it up* – er, that's it. They took lung fluid, with many sources of genetic material, from one single person alleged to be infected with Covid-19 by a PCR test which they *claimed*, without clear evidence, contained a 'virus'. They used several computer programs to create a model of a theoretical virus genome sequence from more than fifty-six million small sequences of RNA, each of an unknown source, assembling them like a puzzle with no known solution. The computer filled in the gaps with sequences from bits in the gene bank to make it look like a bat SARS-like coronavirus! A wave of the magic wand and poof, an *in silico* (computer-generated) genome, a scientific fantasy, was created. UK health researcher Dr Kevin Corbett made the same point with this analogy:

... It's like giving you a few bones and saying that's your fish. It could be any fish. Not even a skeleton. Here's a few fragments of bones. That's your fish ... It's all from gene bank and the bits of the virus sequence that weren't there they made up.

They synthetically created them to fill in the blanks. That's what genetics is; it's a code. So it's ABBCCDDDD and you're missing some what you think is EEE so you put it in. It's all

synthetic. You just manufacture the bits that are missing. This is the end result of the geneticization of virology. This is basically a computer virus.

Further confirmation came in an email exchange between British citizen journalist Frances Leader and the government's Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (the Gates-funded MHRA) which gave emergency permission for untested 'Covid vaccines' to be used. The agency admitted that the 'vaccine' is not based on an isolated 'virus', but comes from a *computer-generated model*. Frances Leader was naturally banned from Cult-owned fascist Twitter for making this exchange public. The process of creating computer-generated alleged 'viruses' is called 'in silico' or 'in silicon' – computer chips – and the term 'in silico' is believed to originate with biological experiments using only a computer in 1989. 'Vaccines' involved with 'Covid' are also produced 'in silico' or by computer not a natural process. If the original 'virus' is nothing more than a made-up computer model how can there be 'new variants' of something that never existed in the first place? They are not new 'variants'; they are new *computer models* only minutely different to the original program and designed to further terrify the population into having the 'vaccine' and submitting to fascism. You want a 'new variant'? Click, click, enter – there you go. Tell the medical profession that you have discovered a 'South African variant', 'UK variants' or a 'Brazilian variant' and in the usual HIV-causes-AIDS manner they will unquestioningly repeat it with no evidence whatsoever to support these claims. They will go on television and warn about the dangers of 'new variants' while doing nothing more than repeating what they have been told to be true and knowing that any deviation from that would be career suicide. Big-time insiders will know it's a hoax, but much of the medical community is clueless about the way they are being played and themselves play the public without even being aware they are doing so. What an interesting 'coincidence' that AstraZeneca and Oxford University were conducting 'Covid vaccine trials' in the three countries – the UK, South Africa and Brazil – where the first three 'variants' were claimed to have 'broken out'.

Here's your 'virus' – it's a unicorn

Dr Andrew Kaufman presented a brilliant analysis describing how the 'virus' was imagined into fake existence when he dissected an article published by *Nature* and written by 19 authors detailing *alleged* 'sequencing of a complete viral genome' of the 'new SARS-CoV-2 virus'. This computer-modelled *in silico* genome was used as a template for all subsequent genome sequencing experiments that resulted in the so-called variants which he said now number more than 6,000. The fake genome was constructed from more than 56 million individual short strands of RNA. Those little pieces were assembled into longer pieces by finding areas of overlapping sequences. The computer programs created over two million possible combinations from which the authors simply chose the longest one. They then compared this to a 'bat virus' and the computer 'alignment' rearranged the sequence and filled in the gaps! They called this computer-generated abomination the 'complete genome'. Dr Tom Cowan, a fellow medical author and collaborator with Kaufman, said such computer-generation constitutes scientific fraud and he makes this superb analogy:

Here is an equivalency: A group of researchers claim to have found a unicorn because they found a piece of a hoof, a hair from a tail, and a snippet of a horn. They then add that information into a computer and program it to re-create the unicorn, and they then claim this computer re-creation is the real unicorn. Of course, they had never actually seen a unicorn so could not possibly have examined its genetic makeup to compare their samples with the actual unicorn's hair, hooves and horn.

The researchers claim they decided which is the real genome of SARS-CoV-2 by 'consensus', sort of like a vote. Again, different computer programs will come up with different versions of the imaginary 'unicorn', so they come together as a group and decide which is the real imaginary unicorn.

This is how the 'virus' that has transformed the world was brought into fraudulent 'existence'. Extraordinary, yes, but as the Nazis said the bigger the lie the more will believe it. Cowan, however, wasn't finished and he went on to identify what he called the real blockbuster in the paper. He quotes this section from a paper written

by virologists and published by the CDC and then explains what it means:

Therefore, we examined the capacity of SARS-CoV-2 to infect and replicate in several common primate and human cell lines, including human adenocarcinoma cells (A549), human liver cells (HUH 7.0), and human embryonic kidney cells (HEK-293T). In addition to Vero E6 and Vero CCL81 cells. ... Each cell line was inoculated at high multiplicity of infection and examined 24h post-infection.

No CPE was observed in any of the cell lines except in Vero cells, which grew to greater than 10 to the 7th power at 24 h post-infection. In contrast, HUH 7.0 and 293T showed only modest viral replication, and A549 cells were incompatible with SARS CoV-2 infection.

Cowan explains that when virologists attempt to prove infection they have three possible 'hosts' or models on which they can test. The first was humans. Exposure to humans was generally not done for ethical reasons and has never been done with SARS-CoV-2 or any coronavirus. The second possible host was animals. Cowan said that forgetting for a moment that they never actually use purified virus when exposing animals they do use solutions that they *claim* contain the virus. Exposure to animals has been done with SARS-CoV-2 in an experiment involving mice and this is what they found: *None of the wild (normal) mice got sick*. In a group of genetically-modified mice, a statistically insignificant number lost weight and had slightly bristled fur, but they experienced nothing like the illness called 'Covid-19'. Cowan said the third method – the one they mostly rely on – is to inoculate solutions they *say* contain the virus onto a variety of tissue cultures. This process had never been shown to kill tissue *unless* the sample material was starved of nutrients and poisoned as *part of the process*. Yes, incredibly, in tissue experiments designed to show the 'virus' is responsible for killing the tissue they starve the tissue of nutrients and add toxic drugs including antibiotics and they do not have control studies to see if it's the starvation and poisoning that is degrading the tissue rather than the 'virus' they allege to be in there somewhere. You want me to pinch you? Yep, I understand. Tom Cowan said this about the whole nonsensical farce as he explains what that quote from the CDC paper really means:

The shocking thing about the above quote is that using their own methods, the virologists found that solutions containing SARS-CoV-2 – even in high amounts – were NOT, I repeat NOT, infective to any of the three human tissue cultures they tested. In plain English, this means they proved, on their terms, that this ‘new coronavirus’ is not infectious to human beings. It is ONLY infective to monkey kidney cells, and only then when you add two potent drugs (gentamicin and amphotericin), known to be toxic to kidneys, to the mix.

My friends, read this again and again. These virologists, published by the CDC, performed a clear proof, on their terms, showing that the SARS-CoV-2 virus is harmless to human beings. That is the only possible conclusion, but, unfortunately, this result is not even mentioned in their conclusion. They simply say they can provide virus stocks cultured only on monkey Vero cells, thanks for coming.

Cowan concluded: ‘If people really understood how this “science” was done, I would hope they would storm the gates and demand honesty, transparency and truth.’ Dr Michael Yeadon, former Vice President and Chief Scientific Adviser at drug giant Pfizer has been a vocal critic of the ‘Covid vaccine’ and its potential for multiple harm. He said in an interview in April, 2021, that ‘not one [vaccine] has the virus. He was asked why vaccines normally using a ‘dead’ version of a disease to activate the immune system were not used for ‘Covid’ and instead we had the synthetic methods of the ‘mRNA Covid vaccine’. Yeadon said that to do the former ‘you’d have to have some of [the virus] wouldn’t you?’ He added: ‘No-one’s got any – seriously.’ Yeadon said that surely they couldn’t have fooled the whole world for a year without having a virus, ‘but oddly enough ask around – no one’s got it’. He didn’t know why with all the ‘great labs’ around the world that the virus had not been isolated – ‘Maybe they’ve been too busy running bad PCR tests and vaccines that people don’t need.’ What is today called ‘science’ is not ‘science’ at all. Science is no longer what is, but whatever people can be manipulated to *believe* that it is. Real science has been hijacked by the Cult to dispense and produce the ‘expert scientists’ and contentions that suit the agenda of the Cult. How big-time this has happened with the ‘Covid’ hoax which is entirely based on fake science delivered by fake ‘scientists’ and fake ‘doctors’. The human-caused climate change hoax is also entirely based on fake science delivered by fake ‘scientists’ and fake ‘climate experts’. In both cases real

scientists, climate experts and doctors have their views suppressed and deleted by the Cult-owned science establishment, media and Silicon Valley. This is the 'science' that politicians claim to be 'following' and a common denominator of 'Covid' and climate are Cult psychopaths Bill Gates and his mate Klaus Schwab at the Gates-funded World Economic Forum. But, don't worry, it's all just a coincidence and absolutely nothing to worry about. Zzzzzzzzz.

What is a 'virus' REALLY?

Dr Tom Cowan is one of many contesting the very existence of viruses let alone that they cause disease. This is understandable when there is no scientific evidence for a disease-causing 'virus'. German virologist Dr Stefan Lanka won a landmark case in 2017 in the German Supreme Court over his contention that there is no such thing as a measles virus. He had offered a big prize for anyone who could prove there is and Lanka won his case when someone sought to claim the money. There is currently a prize of more than 225,000 euros on offer from an Isolate Truth Fund for anyone who can prove the isolation of SARS-CoV-2 and its genetic substance. Lanka wrote in an article headed 'The Misconception Called Virus' that scientists think a 'virus' is causing tissue to become diseased and degraded when in fact it is the *processes they are using* which do that – not a 'virus'. Lanka has done an important job in making this point clear as Cowan did in his analysis of the CDC paper. Lanka says that all claims about viruses as disease-causing pathogens are wrong and based on 'easily recognisable, understandable and verifiable misinterpretations.' Scientists believed they were working with 'viruses' in their laboratories when they were really working with 'typical particles of specific dying tissues or cells ...' Lanka said that the tissue decaying process claimed to be caused by a 'virus' still happens when no alleged 'virus' is involved. It's the *process* that does the damage and not a 'virus'. The genetic sample is deprived of nutrients, removed from its energy supply through removal from the body and then doused in toxic antibiotics to remove any bacteria. He confirms again that establishment scientists do not (pinch me)

conduct control experiments to see if this is the case and if they did they would see the claims that 'viruses' are doing the damage is nonsense. He adds that during the measles 'virus' court case he commissioned an independent laboratory to perform just such a control experiment and the result was that the tissues and cells died in the exact same way as with alleged 'infected' material. This is supported by a gathering number of scientists, doctors and researchers who reject what is called 'germ theory' or the belief in the body being infected by contagious sources emitted by other people. Researchers Dawn Lester and David Parker take the same stance in their highly-detailed and sourced book *What Really Makes You Ill – Why everything you thought you knew about disease is wrong* which was recommended to me by a number of medical professionals genuinely seeking the truth. Lester and Parker say there is no provable scientific evidence to show that a 'virus' can be transmitted between people or people and animals or animals and people:

The definition also claims that viruses are the cause of many diseases, as if this has been definitively proven. But this is not the case; there is no original scientific evidence that definitively demonstrates that any virus is the cause of any disease. The burden of proof for any theory lies with those who proposed it; but none of the existing documents provides 'proof' that supports the claim that 'viruses' are pathogens.

Dr Tom Cowan employs one of his clever analogies to describe the process by which a 'virus' is named as the culprit for a disease when what is called a 'virus' is only material released by cells detoxing themselves from infiltration by chemical or radiation poisoning. The tidal wave of technologically-generated radiation in the 'smart' modern world plus all the toxic food and drink are causing this to happen more than ever. Deluded 'scientists' misread this as a gathering impact of what they wrongly label 'viruses'.

Paper can infect houses

Cowan said in an article for davidicke.com – with his tongue only mildly in his cheek – that he believed he had made a tremendous

discovery that may revolutionise science. He had discovered that small bits of paper are alive, 'well alive-ish', can 'infect' houses, and then reproduce themselves inside the house. The result was that this explosion of growth in the paper inside the house causes the house to explode, blowing it to smithereens. His evidence for this new theory is that in the past months he had carefully examined many of the houses in his neighbourhood and found almost no scraps of paper on the lawns and surrounds of the house. There was an occasional stray label, but nothing more. Then he would return to these same houses a week or so later and with a few, not all of them, particularly the old and decrepit ones, he found to his shock and surprise they were littered with stray bits of paper. He knew then that the paper had infected these houses, made copies of itself, and blew up the house. A young boy on a bicycle at one of the sites told him he had seen a demolition crew using dynamite to explode the house the previous week, but Cowan dismissed this as the idle thoughts of silly boys because 'I was on to something big'. He was on to how 'scientists' mistake genetic material in the detoxifying process for something they call a 'virus'. Cowan said of his house and paper story:

If this sounds crazy to you, it's because it should. This scenario is obviously nuts. But consider this admittedly embellished, for effect, current viral theory that all scientists, medical doctors and virologists currently believe.

He takes the example of the 'novel SARS-Cov2' virus to prove the point. First they take someone with an undefined illness called 'Covid-19' and don't even attempt to find any virus in their sputum. Never mind the scientists still describe how this 'virus', which they have not located attaches to a cell receptor, injects its genetic material, in 'Covid's' case, RNA, into the cell. The RNA once inserted exploits the cell to reproduce itself and makes 'thousands, nay millions, of copies of itself ... Then it emerges victorious to claim its next victim':

If you were to look in the scientific literature for proof, actual scientific proof, that uniform SARS-CoV2 viruses have been properly isolated from the sputum of a sick person, that actual spike proteins could be seen protruding from the virus (which has not been found), you would find that such evidence doesn't exist.

If you go looking in the published scientific literature for actual pictures, proof, that these spike proteins or any viral proteins are ever attached to any receptor embedded in any cell membrane, you would also find that no such evidence exists. If you were to look for a video or documented evidence of the intact virus injecting its genetic material into the body of the cell, reproducing itself and then emerging victorious by budding off the cell membrane, you would find that no such evidence exists.

The closest thing you would find is electron micrograph pictures of cellular particles, possibly attached to cell debris, both of which to be seen were stained by heavy metals, a process that completely distorts their architecture within the living organism. This is like finding bits of paper stuck to the blown-up bricks, thereby proving the paper emerged by taking pieces of the bricks on its way out.

The Enders baloney

Cowan describes the 'Covid' story as being just as make-believe as his paper story and he charts back this fantasy to a Nobel Prize winner called John Enders (1897-1985), an American biomedical scientist who has been dubbed 'The Father of Modern Vaccines'. Enders is claimed to have 'discovered' the process of the viral culture which 'proved' that a 'virus' caused measles. Cowan explains how Enders did this 'by using the EXACT same procedure that has been followed by every virologist to find and characterize every new virus since 1954'. Enders took throat swabs from children with measles and immersed them in 2ml of milk. Penicillin (100u/ml) and the antibiotic streptomycin (50,g/ml) were added and the whole mix was centrifuged – rotated at high speed to separate large cellular debris from small particles and molecules as with milk and cream, for example. Cowan says that if the aim is to find little particles of genetic material ('viruses') in the snot from children with measles it would seem that the last thing you would do is mix the snot with other material – milk –that also has genetic material. 'How are you ever going to know whether whatever you found came from the snot or the milk?' He points out that streptomycin is a 'nephrotoxic' or poisonous-to-the-kidney drug. You will see the relevance of that

shortly. Cowan says that it gets worse, much worse, when Enders describes the culture medium upon which the virus 'grows': 'The culture medium consisted of bovine amniotic fluid (90%), beef embryo extract (5%), horse serum (5%), antibiotics and phenol red as an indicator of cell metabolism.' Cowan asks incredulously: 'Did he just say that the culture medium also contained fluids and tissues that are themselves rich sources of genetic material?' The genetic cocktail, or 'medium', is inoculated onto tissue and cells from rhesus monkey *kidney* tissue. This is where the importance of streptomycin comes in and currently-used antimicrobials and other drugs that are *poisonous to kidneys* and used in ALL modern viral cultures (e.g. gentamicin, streptomycin, and amphotericin). Cowan asks: 'How are you ever going to know from this witch's brew where any genetic material comes from as we now have five different sources of rich genetic material in our mix?' Remember, he says, that all genetic material, whether from monkey kidney tissues, bovine serum, milk, etc., is made from the exact same components. The same central question returns: 'How are you possibly going to know that it was the virus that killed the kidney tissue and not the toxic antibiotic and starvation rations on which you are growing the tissue?' John Enders answered the question himself – *you can't*:

A second agent was obtained from an uninoculated culture of monkey kidney cells. The cytopathic changes [death of the cells] it induced in the unstained preparations could not be distinguished with confidence from the viruses isolated from measles.

The death of the cells ('cytopathic changes') happened in exactly the same manner, whether they inoculated the kidney tissue with the measles snot or not, Cowan says. 'This is evidence that the destruction of the tissue, the very proof of viral causation of illness, was not caused by anything in the snot because they saw the same destructive effect when the snot was not even used ... the cytopathic, i.e., cell-killing, changes come from the process of the culture itself, not from any virus in any snot, period.' Enders quotes in his 1957 paper a virologist called Ruckle as reporting similar findings 'and in addition has isolated an agent from monkey kidney tissue that is so

far indistinguishable from human measles virus'. In other words, Cowan says, these particles called 'measles viruses' are simply and clearly breakdown products of the starved and poisoned tissue. For measles 'virus' see all 'viruses' including the so-called 'Covid virus'. Enders, the 'Father of Modern Vaccines', also said:

There is a potential risk in employing cultures of primate cells for the production of vaccines composed of attenuated virus, since the presence of other agents possibly latent in primate tissues cannot be definitely excluded by any known method.

Cowan further quotes from a paper published in the journal *Viruses* in May, 2020, while the 'Covid pandemic' was well underway in the media if not in reality. 'EVs' here refers to particles of genetic debris from our own tissues, such as exosomes of which more in a moment: 'The remarkable resemblance between EVs and viruses has caused quite a few problems in the studies focused on the analysis of EVs released during viral infections.' Later the paper adds that to date a reliable method that can actually guarantee a complete separation (of EVs from viruses) DOES NOT EXIST. This was published at a time when a fairy tale 'virus' was claimed in total certainty to be causing a fairy tale 'viral disease' called 'Covid-19' – a fairy tale that was already well on the way to transforming human society in the image that the Cult has worked to achieve for so long. Cowan concludes his article:

To summarize, there is no scientific evidence that pathogenic viruses exist. What we think of as 'viruses' are simply the normal breakdown products of dead and dying tissues and cells. When we are well, we make fewer of these particles; when we are starved, poisoned, suffocated by wearing masks, or afraid, we make more.

There is no engineered virus circulating and making people sick. People in laboratories all over the world are making genetically modified products to make people sick. These are called vaccines. There is no virome, no 'ecosystem' of viruses, viruses are not 8%, 50% or 100 % of our genetic material. These are all simply erroneous ideas based on the misconception called a virus.

What is 'Covid'? Load of bollocks

The background described here by Cowan and Lanka was emphasised in the first video presentation that I saw by Dr Andrew Kaufman when he asked whether the 'Covid virus' was in truth a natural defence mechanism of the body called 'exosomes'. These are released by cells when in states of toxicity – see the same themes returning over and over. They are released ever more profusely as chemical and radiation toxicity increases and think of the potential effect therefore of 5G alone as its destructive frequencies infest the human energetic information field with a gathering pace (5G went online in Wuhan in 2019 as the 'virus' emerged). I'll have more about this later. Exosomes transmit a warning to the rest of the body that 'Houston, we have a problem'. Kaufman presented images of exosomes and compared them with 'Covid' under an electron microscope and the similarity was remarkable. They both attach to the same cell receptors (*claimed* in the case of 'Covid'), contain the same genetic material in the form of RNA or ribonucleic acid, and both are found in 'viral cell cultures' with damaged or dying cells. James Hildreth MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Meharry Medical College at Johns Hopkins, said: 'The virus is fully an exosome in every sense of the word.' Kaufman's conclusion was that there is no 'virus': 'This entire pandemic is a completely manufactured crisis ... there is no evidence of anyone dying from [this] illness.' Dr Tom Cowan and Sally Fallon Morell, authors of *The Contagion Myth*, published a statement with Dr Kaufman in February, 2021, explaining why the 'virus' does not exist and you can read it that in full in the Appendix.

'Virus' theory can be traced to the 'cell theory' in 1858 of German physician Rudolf Virchow (1821-1920) who contended that disease originates from a single cell infiltrated by a 'virus'. Dr Stefan Lanka said that findings and insights with respect to the structure, function and central importance of tissues in the creation of life, which were already known in 1858, comprehensively refute the cell theory. Virchow ignored them. We have seen the part later played by John Enders in the 1950s and Lanka notes that infection theories were only established as a global dogma through the policies and

eugenics of the Third Reich in Nazi Germany (creation of the same Sabbatian cult behind the 'Covid' hoax). Lanka said: 'Before 1933, scientists dared to contradict this theory; after 1933, these critical scientists were silenced'. Dr Tom Cowan's view is that ill-health is caused by too much of something, too little of something, or toxification from chemicals and radiation – not contagion. We must also highlight as a major source of the 'virus' theology a man still called the 'Father of Modern Virology' – Thomas Milton Rivers (1888-1962). There is no way given the Cult's long game policy that it was a coincidence for the 'Father of Modern Virology' to be director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research from 1937 to 1956 when he is credited with making the Rockefeller Institute a leader in 'viral research'. Cult Rockefellerers were the force behind the creation of Big Pharma 'medicine', established the World Health Organisation in 1948, and have long and close associations with the Gates family that now runs the WHO during the pandemic hoax through mega-rich Cult gofer and psychopath Bill Gates.

Only a Renegade Mind can see through all this bullshit by asking the questions that need to be answered, not taking 'no' or prevarication for an answer, and certainly not hiding from the truth in fear of speaking it. Renegade Minds have always changed the world for the better and they will change this one no matter how bleak it may currently appear to be.

CHAPTER SIX

Sequence of deceit

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything
Mark Twain

Against the background that I have laid out this far the sequence that took us from an invented 'virus' in Cult-owned China in late 2019 to the fascist transformation of human society can be seen and understood in a whole new context.

We were told that a deadly disease had broken out in Wuhan and the world media began its campaign (coordinated by behavioural psychologists as we shall see) to terrify the population into unquestioning compliance. We were shown images of Chinese people collapsing in the street which never happened in the West with what was supposed to be the same condition. In the earliest days when alleged cases and deaths were few the fear register was hysterical in many areas of the media and this would expand into the common media narrative across the world. The real story was rather different, but we were never told that. The Chinese government, one of the Cult's biggest centres of global operation, said they had discovered a new illness with flu-like and pneumonia-type symptoms in a city with such toxic air that it is overwhelmed with flu-like symptoms, pneumonia and respiratory disease. Chinese scientists said it was a new – 'novel' – coronavirus which they called Sars-Cov-2 and that it caused a disease they labelled 'Covid-19'. There was no evidence for this and the 'virus' has never to this day been isolated, purified and its genetic code established from that. It

was from the beginning a computer-generated fiction. Stories of Chinese whistleblowers saying the number of deaths was being suppressed or that the 'new disease' was related to the Wuhan bio-lab misdirected mainstream and alternative media into cul-de-sacs to obscure the real truth – there was no 'virus'.

Chinese scientists took genetic material from the lung fluid of just a few people and said they had found a 'new' disease when this material had a wide range of content. There was no evidence for a 'virus' for the very reasons explained in the last two chapters. The 'virus' has never been shown to (a) exist and (b) cause any disease. People were diagnosed on symptoms that are so widespread in Wuhan and polluted China and with a PCR test that can't detect infectious disease. On this farce the whole global scam was sold to the rest of the world which would also diagnose respiratory disease as 'Covid-19' from symptoms alone or with a PCR test not testing for a 'virus'. Flu miraculously disappeared *worldwide* in 2020 and into 2021 as it was redesignated 'Covid-19'. It was really the same old flu with its 'flu-like' symptoms attributed to 'flu-like' 'Covid-19'. At the same time with very few exceptions the Chinese response of draconian lockdown and fascism was the chosen weapon to respond across the West as recommended by the Cult-owned Tedros at the Cult-owned World Health Organization run by the Cult-owned Gates. All was going according to plan. Chinese scientists – everything in China is controlled by the Cult-owned government – compared their contaminated RNA lung-fluid material with other RNA sequences and said it appeared to be just under 80 percent identical to the SARS-CoV-1 'virus' claimed to be the cause of the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) 'outbreak' in 2003. They decreed that because of this the 'new virus' had to be related and they called it SARS-CoV-2. There are some serious problems with this assumption and *assumption* was all it was. Most 'factual' science turns out to be assumptions repeated into everyone-knows-that. A match of under 80-percent is meaningless. Dr Kaufman makes the point that there's a 96 percent genetic correlation between humans and chimpanzees, but 'no one would say our genetic material is part

of the chimpanzee family'. Yet the Chinese authorities were claiming that a much lower percentage, less than 80 percent, proved the existence of a new 'coronavirus'. For goodness sake human DNA is 60 percent similar to a *banana*.

You are feeling sleepy

The entire 'Covid' hoax is a global Psyop, a psychological operation to program the human mind into believing and fearing a complete fantasy. A crucial aspect of this was what *appeared* to happen in Italy. It was all very well streaming out daily images of an alleged catastrophe in Wuhan, but to the Western mind it was still on the other side of the world in a very different culture and setting. A reaction of 'this could happen to me and my family' was still nothing like as intense enough for the mind-doctors. The Cult needed a Western example to push people over that edge and it chose Italy, one of its major global locations going back to the Roman Empire. An Italian 'Covid' crisis was manufactured in a particular area called Lombardy which just happens to be notorious for its toxic air and therefore respiratory disease. Wuhan, China, *déjà vu*. An hysterical media told horror stories of Italians dying from 'Covid' in their droves and how Lombardy hospitals were being overrun by a tidal wave of desperately ill people needing treatment after being struck down by the 'deadly virus'. Here was the psychological turning point the Cult had planned. Wow, if this is happening in Italy, the Western mind concluded, this indeed could happen to me and my family. Another point is that Italian authorities responded by following the Chinese blueprint so vehemently recommended by the Cult-owned World Health Organization. They imposed fascistic lockdowns on the whole country viciously policed with the help of surveillance drones sweeping through the streets seeking out anyone who escaped from mass house arrest. Livelihoods were destroyed and psychology unravelled in the way we have witnessed since in all lockdown countries. Crucial to the plan was that Italy responded in this way to set the precedent of suspending freedom and imposing fascism in a 'Western liberal democracy'. I emphasised in an

animated video explanation on davidicke.com posted in the summer of 2020 how important it was to the Cult to expand the Chinese lockdown model across the West. Without this, and the bare-faced lie that non-symptomatic people could still transmit a 'disease' they didn't have, there was no way locking down the whole population, sick and not sick, could be pulled off. At just the right time and with no evidence Cult operatives and gofers claimed that people without symptoms could pass on the 'disease'. In the name of protecting the 'vulnerable' like elderly people, who lockdowns would kill by the tens of thousands, we had for the first time healthy people told to isolate as well as the sick. The great majority of people who tested positive had no symptoms because there was nothing wrong with them. It was just a trick made possible by a test not testing for the 'virus'.

Months after my animated video the Gates-funded Professor Neil Ferguson at the Gates-funded Imperial College confirmed that I was right. He didn't say it in those terms, naturally, but he did say it. Ferguson will enter the story shortly for his outrageously crazy 'computer models' that led to Britain, the United States and many other countries following the Chinese and now Italian methods of response. Put another way, following the Cult script. Ferguson said that SAGE, the UK government's scientific advisory group which has controlled 'Covid' policy from the start, wanted to follow the Chinese lockdown model (while they all continued to work and be paid), but they wondered if they could possibly, in Ferguson's words, 'get away with it in Europe'. 'Get away with it'? Who the hell do these moronic, arrogant people think they are? This appalling man Ferguson said that once Italy went into national lockdown they realised they, too, could mimic China:

It's a communist one-party state, we said. We couldn't get away with it in Europe, we thought ... and then Italy did it. And we realised we could. Behind this garbage from Ferguson is a simple fact: Doing the same as China in every country was the plan from the start and Ferguson's 'models' would play a central role in achieving that. It's just a coincidence, of course, and absolutely nothing to worry your little head about.

Oops, sorry, our mistake

Once the Italian segment of the Psyop had done the job it was designed to do a very different story emerged. Italian authorities revealed that 99 percent of those who had 'died from Covid-19' in Italy had one, two, three, or more 'co-morbidities' or illnesses and health problems that could have ended their life. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a figure of 94 percent for Americans dying of 'Covid' while having other serious medical conditions – on average two to three (some five or six) other potential causes of death. In terms of death from an unproven 'virus' I say it is 100 percent. The other one percent in Italy and six percent in the US would presumably have died from 'Covid's' flu-like symptoms with a range of other possible causes in conjunction with a test not testing for the 'virus'. Fox News reported that even more startling figures had emerged in one US county in which 410 of 422 deaths attributed to 'Covid-19' had other potentially deadly health conditions. The Italian National Health Institute said later that the average age of people dying with a 'Covid-19' diagnosis in Italy was about 81. Ninety percent were over 70 with ten percent over 90. In terms of other reasons to die some 80 percent had two or more chronic diseases with half having three or more including cardiovascular problems, diabetes, respiratory problems and cancer. Why is the phantom 'Covid-19' said to kill overwhelmingly old people and hardly affect the young? Old people continually die of many causes and especially respiratory disease which you can re-diagnose 'Covid-19' while young people die in tiny numbers by comparison and rarely of respiratory disease. Old people 'die of Covid' because they die of other things that can be redesignated 'Covid' and it really is that simple.

Flu has flown

The blueprint was in place. Get your illusory 'cases' from a test not testing for the 'virus' and redesignate other causes of death as 'Covid-19'. You have an instant 'pandemic' from something that is nothing more than a computer-generated fiction. With near-on a

billion people having 'flu-like' symptoms every year the potential was limitless and we can see why flu quickly and apparently miraculously disappeared *worldwide* by being diagnosed 'Covid-19'. The painfully bloody obvious was explained away by the childlike media in headlines like this in the UK '*Independent*': 'Not a single case of flu detected by Public Health England this year as Covid restrictions suppress virus'. I kid you not. The masking, social distancing and house arrest that did not make the 'Covid virus' disappear somehow did so with the 'flu virus'. Even worse the article, by a bloke called Samuel Lovett, suggested that maybe the masking, sanitising and other 'Covid' measures should continue to keep the flu away. With a ridiculousness that disturbs your breathing (it's 'Covid-19') the said Lovett wrote: 'With widespread social distancing and mask-wearing measures in place throughout the UK, the usual routes of transmission for influenza have been blocked.' He had absolutely no evidence to support that statement, but look at the consequences of him acknowledging the obvious. With flu not disappearing at all and only being relabelled 'Covid-19' he would have to contemplate that 'Covid' was a hoax on a scale that is hard to imagine. You need guts and commitment to truth to even go there and that's clearly something Samuel Lovett does not have in abundance. He would never have got it through the editors anyway.

Tens of thousands die in the United States alone every winter from flu including many with pneumonia complications. CDC figures record *45 million* Americans diagnosed with flu in 2017-2018 of which 61,000 died and some reports claim 80,000. Where was the same hysteria then that we have seen with 'Covid-19'? Some 250,000 Americans are admitted to hospital with pneumonia every year with about 50,000 cases proving fatal. About 65 million suffer respiratory disease every year and three million deaths makes this the third biggest cause of death worldwide. You only have to redesignate a portion of all these people 'Covid-19' and you have an instant global pandemic or the *appearance* of one. Why would doctors do this? They are told to do this and all but a few dare not refuse those who must be obeyed. Doctors in general are not researching their own

knowledge and instead take it direct and unquestioned from the authorities that own them and their careers. The authorities say they must now diagnose these symptoms 'Covid-19' and not flu, or whatever, and they do it. Dark suits say put 'Covid-19' on death certificates no matter what the cause of death and the doctors do it. Renegade Minds don't fall for the illusion that doctors and medical staff are all highly-intelligent, highly-principled, seekers of medical truth. *Some are*, but not the majority. They are repeaters, gofers, and yes sir, no sir, purveyors of what the system demands they purvey. The 'Covid' con is not merely confined to diseases of the lungs. Instructions to doctors to put 'Covid-19' on death certificates for anyone dying of *anything* within 28 days (or much more) of a positive test not testing for the 'virus' opened the floodgates. The term dying *with* 'Covid' and not *of* 'Covid' was coined to cover the truth. Whether it was a *with* or an *of* they were all added to the death numbers attributed to the 'deadly virus' compiled by national governments and globally by the Gates-funded Johns Hopkins operation in the United States that was so involved in those 'pandemic' simulations. Fraudulent deaths were added to the ever-growing list of fraudulent 'cases' from false positives from a false test. No wonder Professor Walter Ricciardi, scientific advisor to the Italian minister of health, said after the Lombardy hysteria had done its job that 'Covid' death rates were due to Italy having the second oldest population in the world and to *how hospitals record deaths*:

The way in which we code deaths in our country is very generous in the sense that all the people who die in hospitals with the coronavirus are deemed to be dying of the coronavirus. On re-evaluation by the National Institute of Health, only 12 per cent of death certificates have shown a direct causality from coronavirus, while 88 per cent of patients who have died have at least one pre-morbidity – many had two or three.

This is extraordinary enough when you consider the propaganda campaign to use Italy to terrify the world, but how can they even say twelve percent were genuine when the 'virus' has not been shown to exist, its 'code' is a computer program, and diagnosis comes from a test not testing for it? As in China, and soon the world, 'Covid-19' in

Italy was a redesignation of diagnosis. Lies and corruption were to become the real 'pandemic' fuelled by a pathetically-compliant medical system taking its orders from the tiny few at the top of their national hierarchy who answered to the World Health Organization which answers to Gates and the Cult. Doctors were told – ordered – to diagnose a particular set of symptoms 'Covid-19' and put that on the death certificate for any cause of death if the patient had tested positive with a test not testing for the virus or had 'Covid' symptoms like the flu. The United States even introduced big financial incentives to manipulate the figures with hospitals receiving £4,600 from the Medicare system for diagnosing someone with regular pneumonia, \$13,000 if they made the diagnosis from the same symptoms 'Covid-19' pneumonia, and \$39,000 if they put a 'Covid' diagnosed patient on a ventilator that would almost certainly kill them. A few – painfully and pathetically few – medical whistleblowers revealed (before Cult-owned YouTube deleted their videos) that they had been instructed to 'let the patient crash' and put them straight on a ventilator instead of going through a series of far less intrusive and dangerous methods as they would have done before the pandemic hoax began and the financial incentives kicked in. We are talking cold-blooded murder given that ventilators are so damaging to respiratory systems they are usually the last step before heaven awaits. Renegade Minds never fall for the belief that people in white coats are all angels of mercy and cannot be full-on psychopaths. I have explained in detail in *The Answer* how what I am describing here played out across the world coordinated by the World Health Organization through the medical hierarchies in almost every country.

Medical scientist calls it

Information about the non-existence of the 'virus' began to emerge for me in late March, 2020, and mushroomed after that. I was sent an email by Sir Julian Rose, a writer, researcher, and organic farming promotor, from a medical scientist friend of his in the United States. Even at that early stage in March the scientist was able to explain

how the 'Covid' hoax was being manipulated. He said there were no reliable tests for a specific 'Covid-19 virus' and nor were there any reliable agencies or media outlets for reporting numbers of actual 'Covid-19' cases. We have seen in the long period since then that he was absolutely right. 'Every action and reaction to Covid-19 is based on totally flawed data and we simply cannot make accurate assessments,' he said. Most people diagnosed with 'Covid-19' were showing nothing more than cold and flu-like symptoms 'because most coronavirus strains *are* nothing more than cold/flu-like symptoms'. We had farcical situations like an 84-year-old German man testing positive for 'Covid-19' and his nursing home ordered to quarantine only for him to be found to have a common cold. The scientist described back then why PCR tests and what he called the 'Mickey Mouse test kits' were useless for what they were claimed to be identifying. 'The idea these kits can isolate a specific virus like Covid-19 is nonsense,' he said. Significantly, he pointed out that 'if you want to create a totally false panic about a totally false pandemic – pick a coronavirus'. This is exactly what the Cult-owned Gates, World Economic Forum and Johns Hopkins University did with their Event 201 'simulation' followed by their real-life simulation called the 'pandemic'. The scientist said that all you had to do was select the sickest of people with respiratory-type diseases in a single location – 'say Wuhan' – and administer PCR tests to them. You can then claim that anyone showing 'viral sequences' similar to a coronavirus 'which will inevitably be quite a few' is suffering from a 'new' disease:

Since you already selected the sickest flu cases a fairly high proportion of your sample will go on to die. You can then say this 'new' virus has a CFR [case fatality rate] higher than the flu and use this to infuse more concern and do more tests which will of course produce more 'cases', which expands the testing, which produces yet more 'cases' and so on and so on. Before long you have your 'pandemic', and all you have done is use a simple test kit trick to convert the worst flu and pneumonia cases into something new that doesn't ACTUALLY EXIST [my emphasis].

He said that you then 'just run the same scam in other countries' and make sure to keep the fear message running high 'so that people

will feel panicky and less able to think critically'. The only problem to overcome was the fact *there is no* actual new deadly pathogen and only regular sick people. This meant that deaths from the 'new deadly pathogen' were going to be way too low for a real new deadly virus pandemic, but he said this could be overcome in the following ways – all of which would go on to happen:

1. You can claim this is just the beginning and more deaths are imminent [you underpin this with fantasy 'computer projections']. Use this as an excuse to quarantine everyone and then claim the quarantine prevented the expected millions of dead.
2. You can [say that people] 'minimizing' the dangers are irresponsible and bully them into not talking about numbers.
3. You can talk crap about made up numbers hoping to blind people with pseudoscience.
4. You can start testing well people (who, of course, will also likely have shreds of coronavirus [RNA] in them) and thus inflate your 'case figures' with 'asymptomatic carriers' (you will of course have to spin that to sound deadly even though any virologist knows the more symptom-less cases you have the less deadly is your pathogen).

The scientist said that if you take these simple steps 'you can have your own entirely manufactured pandemic up and running in weeks'. His analysis made so early in the hoax was brilliantly prophetic of what would actually unfold. Pulling all the information together in these recent chapters we have this is simple 1, 2, 3, of how you can delude virtually the entire human population into believing in a 'virus' that doesn't exist:

- A 'Covid case' is someone who tests positive with a test not testing for the 'virus'.
- A 'Covid death' is someone who dies of *any cause* within 28 days (or much longer) of testing positive with a test not testing for the 'virus'.
- Asymptomatic means there is nothing wrong with you, but they claim you can pass on what you don't have to justify locking

down (quarantining) healthy people in totality.

The foundations of the hoax are that simple. A study involving ten million people in Wuhan, published in November, 2020, demolished the whole lie about those without symptoms passing on the 'virus'. They found '300 asymptomatic cases' and traced their contacts to find that not one of them was detected with the 'virus'.

'Asymptomatic' patients and their contacts were isolated for no less than two weeks and nothing changed. I know it's all crap, but if you are going to claim that those without symptoms can transmit 'the virus' then you must produce evidence for that and they never have. Even World Health Organization official Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, head of the emerging diseases and zoonosis unit, said as early as June, 2020, that she doubted the validity of asymptomatic transmission. She said that 'from the data we have, it still seems to be rare that an asymptomatic person actually transmits onward to a secondary individual' and by 'rare' she meant that she couldn't cite any case of asymptomatic transmission.

The Ferguson factor

The problem for the Cult as it headed into March, 2020, when the script had lockdown due to start, was that despite all the manipulation of the case and death figures they still did not have enough people alleged to have died from 'Covid' to justify mass house arrest. This was overcome in the way the scientist described: 'You can claim this is just the beginning and more deaths are imminent ... Use this as an excuse to quarantine everyone and then claim the quarantine prevented the expected millions of dead.' Enter one Professor Neil Ferguson, the Gates-funded 'epidemiologist' at the Gates-funded Imperial College in London. Ferguson is Britain's Christian Drosten in that he has a dire record of predicting health outcomes, but is still called upon to advise government on the next health outcome when another 'crisis' comes along. This may seem to be a strange and ridiculous thing to do. Why would you keep turning for policy guidance to people who have a history of being

monumentally wrong? Ah, but it makes sense from the Cult point of view. These 'experts' keep on producing predictions that suit the Cult agenda for societal transformation and so it was with Neil Ferguson as he revealed his horrific (and clearly insane) computer model predictions that allowed lockdowns to be imposed in Britain, the United States and many other countries. Ferguson does not have even an A-level in biology and would appear to have no formal training in computer modelling, medicine or epidemiology, according to Derek Winton, an MSc in Computational Intelligence. He wrote an article somewhat aghast at what Ferguson did which included taking no account of respiratory disease 'seasonality' which means it is far worse in the winter months. Who would have thought that respiratory disease could be worse in the winter? Well, certainly not Ferguson.

The massively China-connected Imperial College and its bizarre professor provided the excuse for the long-incubated Chinese model of human control to travel westward at lightning speed. Imperial College confirms on its website that it collaborates with the Chinese Research Institute; publishes more than 600 research papers every year with Chinese research institutions; has 225 Chinese staff; 2,600 Chinese students – the biggest international group; 7,000 former students living in China which is the largest group outside the UK; and was selected for a tour by China's President Xi Jinping during his state visit to the UK in 2015. The college takes major donations from China and describes itself as the UK's number one university collaborator with Chinese research institutions. The China communist/fascist government did not appear phased by the woeful predictions of Ferguson and Imperial when during the lockdown that Ferguson induced the college signed a five-year collaboration deal with China tech giant Huawei that will have Huawei's indoor 5G network equipment installed at the college's West London tech campus along with an 'AI cloud platform'. The deal includes Chinese sponsorship of Imperial's Venture Catalyst entrepreneurship competition. Imperial is an example of the enormous influence the Chinese government has within British and North American

universities and research centres – and further afield. Up to 200 academics from more than a dozen UK universities are being investigated on suspicion of ‘unintentionally’ helping the Chinese government build weapons of mass destruction by ‘transferring world-leading research in advanced military technology such as aircraft, missile designs and cyberweapons’. Similar scandals have broken in the United States, but it’s all a coincidence. Imperial College serves the agenda in many other ways including the promotion of every aspect of the United Nations Agenda 21/2030 (the Great Reset) and produced computer models to show that human-caused ‘climate change’ is happening when in the real world it isn’t. Imperial College is driving the climate agenda as it drives the ‘Covid’ agenda (both Cult hoaxes) while Patrick Vallance, the UK government’s Chief Scientific Adviser on ‘Covid’, was named Chief Scientific Adviser to the UN ‘climate change’ conference known as COP26 hosted by the government in Glasgow, Scotland. ‘Covid’ and ‘climate’ are fundamentally connected.

Professor Woeful

From Imperial’s bosom came Neil Ferguson still advising government despite his previous disasters and it was announced early on that he and other key people like UK Chief Medical Adviser Chris Whitty had caught the ‘virus’ as the propaganda story was being sold. Somehow they managed to survive and we had Prime Minister Boris Johnson admitted to hospital with what was said to be a severe version of the ‘virus’ in this same period. His whole policy and demeanour changed when he returned to Downing Street. It’s a small world with these government advisors – especially in their communal connections to Gates – and Ferguson had partnered with Whitty to write a paper called ‘Infectious disease: Tough choices to reduce Ebola transmission’ which involved another scare-story that didn’t happen. Ferguson’s ‘models’ predicted that up to 150,000 could die from ‘mad cow disease’, or BSE, and its version in sheep if it was transmitted to humans. BSE was not transmitted and instead triggered by an organophosphate pesticide used to treat a pest on

cows. Fewer than 200 deaths followed from the human form. Models by Ferguson and his fellow incompetents led to the unnecessary culling of millions of pigs, cattle and sheep in the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 which destroyed the lives and livelihoods of farmers and their families who had often spent decades building their herds and flocks. Vast numbers of these animals did not have foot and mouth and had no contact with the infection. Another 'expert' behind the cull was Professor Roy Anderson, a computer modeller at Imperial College specialising in the epidemiology of *human*, not animal, disease. Anderson has served on the Bill and Melinda Gates Grand Challenges in Global Health advisory board and chairs another Gates-funded organisation. Gates is everywhere.

In a precursor to the 'Covid' script Ferguson backed closing schools 'for prolonged periods' over the swine flu 'pandemic' in 2009 and said it would affect a third of the world population if it continued to spread at the speed he claimed to be happening. His mates at Imperial College said much the same and a news report said: 'One of the authors, the epidemiologist and disease modeller Neil Ferguson, who sits on the World Health Organisation's emergency committee for the outbreak, said the virus had "full pandemic potential".' Professor Liam Donaldson, the Chris Whitty of his day as Chief Medical Officer, said the worst case could see 30 percent of the British people infected by swine flu with 65,000 dying. Ferguson and Donaldson were indeed proved correct when at the end of the year the number of deaths attributed to swine flu was 392. The term 'expert' is rather liberally applied unfortunately, not least to complete idiots. Swine flu 'projections' were great for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) as millions rolled in for its Pandemrix influenza vaccine which led to brain damage with children most affected. The British government (taxpayers) paid out more than £60 million in compensation after GSK was given immunity from prosecution. Yet another 'Covid' déjà vu. Swine flu was supposed to have broken out in Mexico, but Dr Wolfgang Wodarg, a German doctor, former member of parliament and critic of the 'Covid' hoax, observed 'the spread of swine flu' in Mexico City at the time. He

said: 'What we experienced in Mexico City was a very mild flu which did not kill more than usual – which killed even fewer people than usual.' Hyping the fear against all the facts is not unique to 'Covid' and has happened many times before. Ferguson is reported to have over-estimated the projected death toll of bird flu (H5N1) by some three million-fold, but bird flu vaccine makers again made a killing from the scare. This is some of the background to the Neil Ferguson who produced the perfectly-timed computer models in early 2020 predicting that half a million people would die in Britain without draconian lockdown and 2.2 million in the United States. Politicians panicked, people panicked, and lockdowns of alleged short duration were instigated to 'flatten the curve' of cases gleaned from a test not testing for the 'virus'. I said at the time that the public could forget the 'short duration' bit. This was an agenda to destroy the livelihoods of the population and force them into mass control through dependency and there was going to be nothing 'short' about it. American researcher Daniel Horowitz described the consequences of the 'models' spewed out by Gates-funded Ferguson and Imperial College:

What led our government and the governments of many other countries into panic was a single Imperial College of UK study, funded by global warming activists, that predicted 2.2 million deaths if we didn't lock down the country. In addition, the reported 8-9% death rate in Italy scared us into thinking there was some other mutation of this virus that they got, which might have come here.

Together with the fact that we were finally testing and had the ability to actually report new cases, we thought we were headed for a death spiral. But again ... we can't flatten a curve if we don't know when the curve started.

How about it *never* started?

Giving them what they want

An investigation by German news outlet *Welt Am Sonntag* (*World on Sunday*) revealed how in March, 2020, the German government gathered together 'leading scientists from several research institutes and universities' and 'together, they were to produce a [modelling]

paper that would serve as legitimization for further tough political measures'. The Cult agenda was justified by computer modelling not based on evidence or reality; it was specifically constructed to justify the Cult demand for lockdowns all over the world to destroy the independent livelihoods of the global population. All these modellers and everyone responsible for the 'Covid' hoax have a date with a trial like those in Nuremberg after World War Two when Nazis faced the consequences of their war crimes. These corrupt-beyond-belief 'modellers' wrote the paper according to government instructions and it said that if lockdown measures were lifted then up to one million Germans would die from 'Covid-19' adding that some would die 'agonizingly at home, gasping for breath' unable to be treated by hospitals that couldn't cope. All lies. No matter – it gave the Cult all that it wanted. What did long-time government 'modeller' Neil Ferguson say? If the UK and the United States didn't lockdown half a million would die in Britain and 2.2 million Americans. Anyone see a theme here? 'Modellers' are such a crucial part of the lockdown strategy that we should look into their background and follow the money. Researcher Rosemary Frei produced an excellent article headlined 'The Modelling-paper Mafiosi'. She highlights a guy called John Edmunds, a British epidemiologist, and professor in the Faculty of Epidemiology and Population Health at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. He studied at Imperial College. Edmunds is a member of government 'Covid' advisory bodies which have been dictating policy, the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE).

Ferguson, another member of NERVTAG and SAGE, led the way with the original 'virus' and Edmunds has followed in the 'variant' stage and especially the so-called UK or Kent variant known as the 'Variant of Concern' (VOC) B.1.1.7. He said in a co-written report for the Centre for Mathematical modelling of Infectious Diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with input from the Centre's 'Covid-19' Working Group, that there was 'a realistic

possibility that VOC B.1.1.7 is associated with an increased risk of death compared to non-VOC viruses'. Fear, fear, fear, get the vaccine, fear, fear, fear, get the vaccine. Rosemary Frei reveals that almost all the paper's authors and members of the modelling centre's 'Covid-19' Working Group receive funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and/or the associated Gates-funded Wellcome Trust. The paper was published by e-journal *Medrx* ^{xiv} which only publishes papers not peer-reviewed and the journal was established by an organisation headed by Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and his missus. What a small world it is. Frei discovered that Edmunds is on the Scientific Advisory Board of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) which was established by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Klaus Schwab's Davos World Economic Forum and Big Pharma giant Wellcome. CEPI was 'launched in Davos [in 2017] to develop vaccines to stop future epidemics', according to its website. 'Our mission is to accelerate the development of vaccines against emerging infectious diseases and enable equitable access to these vaccines for people during outbreaks.' What kind people they are. Rosemary Frei reveals that Public Health England (PHE) director Susan Hopkins is an author of her organisation's non-peer-reviewed reports on 'new variants'. Hopkins is a professor of infectious diseases at London's Imperial College which is gifted tens of millions of dollars a year by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Gates-funded modelling disaster Neil Ferguson also co-authors Public Health England reports and he spoke in December, 2020, about the potential danger of the B.1.1.7. 'UK variant' promoted by Gates-funded modeller John Edmunds. When I come to the 'Covid vaccines' the 'new variants' will be shown for what they are – bollocks.

Connections, connections

All these people and modellers are lockdown-obsessed or, put another way, they demand what the Cult demands. Edmunds said in January, 2021, that to ease lockdowns too soon would be a disaster and they had to 'vaccinate much, much, much more widely than the

elderly'. Rosemary Frei highlights that Edmunds is married to Jeanne Pimenta who is described in a LinkedIn profile as director of epidemiology at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and she held shares in the company. Patrick Vallance, co-chair of SAGE and the government's Chief Scientific Adviser, is a former executive of GSK and has a deferred bonus of shares in the company worth £600,000. GSK has serious business connections with Bill Gates and is collaborating with mRNA-'vaccine' company CureVac to make 'vaccines' for the new variants that Edmunds is talking about. GSK is planning a 'Covid vaccine' with drug giant Sanofi. Puppets Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced in the spring of 2021 that up to 60 million vaccine doses were to be made at the GSK facility at Barnard Castle in the English North East. Barnard Castle, with a population of just 6,000, was famously visited in breach of lockdown rules in April, 2020, by Johnson aide Dominic Cummings who said that he drove there 'to test his eyesight' before driving back to London. Cummings would be better advised to test his integrity – not that it would take long. The GSK facility had nothing to do with his visit then although I'm sure Patrick Vallance would have been happy to arrange an introduction and some tea and biscuits. Ruthless psychopath Gates has made yet another fortune from vaccines in collaboration with Big Pharma companies and gushes at the phenomenal profits to be made from vaccines – more than a 20-to-1 return as he told one interviewer. Gates also tweeted in December, 2019, with the foreknowledge of what was coming: 'What's next for our foundation? I'm particularly excited about what the next year could mean for one of the best buys in global health: vaccines.'

Modeller John Edmunds is a big promotor of vaccines as all these people appear to be. He's the dean of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine's Faculty of Epidemiology and Population Health which is primarily funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Gates-established and funded GAVI vaccine alliance which is the Gates vehicle to vaccinate the world. The organisation Doctors Without Borders has described GAVI as being 'aimed more at supporting drug-industry desires to promote new

products than at finding the most efficient and sustainable means for fighting the diseases of poverty'. But then that's why the psychopath Gates created it. John Edmunds said in a video that the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine is involved in every aspect of vaccine development including large-scale clinical trials. He contends that mathematical modelling can show that vaccines protect individuals and society. That's on the basis of shit in and shit out, I take it. Edmunds serves on the UK Vaccine Network as does Ferguson and the government's foremost 'Covid' adviser, the grim-faced, dark-eyed Chris Whitty. The Vaccine Network says it works 'to support the government to identify and shortlist targeted investment opportunities for the most promising vaccines and vaccine technologies that will help combat infectious diseases with epidemic potential, and to address structural issues related to the UK's broader vaccine infrastructure'. Ferguson is acting Director of the Imperial College Vaccine Impact Modelling Consortium which has funding from the Bill and Melina Gates Foundation and the Gates-created GAVI 'vaccine alliance'. Anyone wonder why these characters see vaccines as the answer to every problem? Ferguson is wildly enthusiastic in his support for GAVI's campaign to vaccinate children en masse in poor countries. You would expect someone like Gates who has constantly talked about the need to reduce the population to want to fund vaccines to keep more people alive. I'm sure that's why he does it. The John Edmunds London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) has a Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre which develops, tests and commercialises vaccines. Rosemary Frei writes:

The vaccines centre also performs affiliated activities like combating 'vaccine hesitancy'. The latter includes the Vaccine Confidence Project. The project's stated purpose is, among other things, 'to provide analysis and guidance for early response and engagement with the public to ensure sustained confidence in vaccines and immunisation'. The Vaccine Confidence Project's director is LSHTM professor Heidi Larson. For more than a decade she's been researching how to combat vaccine hesitancy.

How the bloody hell can blokes like John Edmunds and Neil Ferguson with those connections and financial ties model 'virus' case

and death projections for the government and especially in a way that gives their paymasters like Gates exactly what they want? It's insane, but this is what you find throughout the world.

'Covid' is not dangerous, oops, wait, yes it is

Only days before Ferguson's nightmare scenario made Jackboot Johnson take Britain into a China-style lockdown to save us from a deadly 'virus' the UK government website gov.uk was reporting something very different to Ferguson on a page of official government guidance for 'high consequence infectious diseases (HCID)'. It said this about 'Covid-19':

As of 19 March 2020, COVID-19 is no longer considered to be a high consequence infectious diseases (HCID) in the UK [my emphasis]. The 4 nations public health HCID group made an interim recommendation in January 2020 to classify COVID-19 as an HCID. This was based on consideration of the UK HCID criteria about the virus and the disease with information available during the early stages of the outbreak.

Now that more is known about COVID-19, the public health bodies in the UK have reviewed the most up to date information about COVID-19 against the UK HCID criteria. They have determined that several features have now changed; in particular, more information is available about mortality rates (low overall), and there is now greater clinical awareness and a specific and sensitive laboratory test, the availability of which continues to increase. The Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) is also of the opinion that COVID-19 should no longer be classified as an HCID.

Soon after the government had been exposed for downgrading the risk they upgraded it again and everyone was back to singing from the same Cult hymn book. Ferguson and his fellow Gates clones indicated that lockdowns and restrictions would have to continue until a Gates-funded vaccine was developed. Gates said the same because Ferguson and his like were repeating the Gates script which is the Cult script. 'Flatten the curve' became an ongoing nightmare of continuing lockdowns with periods in between of severe restrictions in pursuit of destroying independent incomes and had nothing to do with protecting health about which the Cult gives not a shit. Why wouldn't Ferguson be pushing a vaccine 'solution' when he's owned by vaccine-obsessive Gates who makes a fortune from them and

when Ferguson heads the Vaccine Impact Modelling Consortium at Imperial College funded by the Gates Foundation and GAVI, the 'vaccine alliance', created by Gates as his personal vaccine promotion operation? To compound the human catastrophe that Ferguson's 'models' did so much to create he was later exposed for breaking his own lockdown rules by having sexual liaisons with his married girlfriend Antonia Staats at his home while she was living at another location with her husband and children. Staats was a 'climate' activist and senior campaigner at the Soros-funded Avaaz which I wouldn't trust to tell me that grass is green. Ferguson had to resign as a government advisor over this hypocrisy in May, 2020, but after a period of quiet he was back being quoted by the ridiculous media on the need for more lockdowns and a vaccine rollout. Other government-advising 'scientists' from Imperial College held the fort in his absence and said lockdown could be indefinite until a vaccine was found. The Cult script was being sung by the payrolled choir. I said there was no intention of going back to 'normal' when the 'vaccine' came because the 'vaccine' is part of a very different agenda that I will discuss in Human 2.0. Why would the Cult want to let the world go back to normal when destroying that normal forever was the whole point of what was happening? House arrest, closing businesses and schools through lockdown, (un)social distancing and masks all followed the Ferguson fantasy models. Again as I predicted (these people are so predictable) when the 'vaccine' arrived we were told that house arrest, lockdown, (un)social distancing and masks would still have to continue. I will deal with the masks in the next chapter because they are of fundamental importance.

Where's the 'pandemic'?

Any mildly in-depth assessment of the figures revealed what was really going on. Cult-funded and controlled organisations still have genuine people working within them such is the number involved. So it is with Genevieve Briand, assistant program director of the Applied Economics master's degree program at Johns Hopkins

University. She analysed the impact that 'Covid-19' had on deaths from *all* causes in the United States using official data from the CDC for the period from early February to early September, 2020. She found that allegedly 'Covid' *related*-deaths exceeded those from heart disease which she found strange with heart disease always the biggest cause of fatalities. Her research became even more significant when she noted the sudden decline in 2020 of *all* non-'Covid' deaths: 'This trend is completely contrary to the pattern observed in all previous years ... the total decrease in deaths by other causes almost exactly equals the increase in deaths by Covid-19.' This was such a game, set and match in terms of what was happening that Johns Hopkins University deleted the article on the grounds that it 'was being used to support false and dangerous inaccuracies about the impact of the pandemic'. No – because it exposed the scam from official CDC figures and this was confirmed when those figures were published in January, 2021. Here we can see the effect of people dying from heart attacks, cancer, road accidents and gunshot wounds – *anything* – having 'Covid-19' on the death certificate along with those diagnosed from 'symptoms' who had even not tested positive with a test not testing for the 'virus'. I am not kidding with the gunshot wounds, by the way. Brenda Bock, coroner in Grand County, Colorado, revealed that two gunshot victims tested positive for the 'virus' within the previous 30 days and were therefore classified as 'Covid deaths'. Bock said: 'These two people had tested positive for Covid, but that's not what killed them. A gunshot wound is what killed them.' She said she had not even finished her investigation when the state listed the gunshot victims as deaths due to the 'virus'. The death and case figures for 'Covid-19' are an absolute joke and yet they are repeated like parrots by the media, politicians and alleged medical 'experts'. The official Cult narrative is the only show in town.

Genevieve Briand found that deaths from all causes were not exceptional in 2020 compared with previous years and a Spanish magazine published figures that said the same about Spain which was a 'Covid' propaganda hotspot at one point. *Discovery Salud*, a

health and medicine magazine, quoted government figures which showed how 17,000 *fewer* people died in Spain in 2020 than in 2019 and more than 26,000 fewer than in 2018. The age-standardised mortality rate for England and Wales when age distribution is taken into account was significantly lower in 2020 than the 1970s, 80s and 90s, and was only the ninth highest since 2000. Where is the 'pandemic'?

Post mortems and autopsies virtually disappeared for 'Covid' deaths amid claims that 'virus-infected' bodily fluids posed a risk to those carrying out the autopsy. This was rejected by renowned German pathologist and forensic doctor Klaus Püschel who said that he and his staff had by then done 150 autopsies on 'Covid' patients with no problems at all. He said they were needed to know why some 'Covid' patients suffered blood clots and not severe respiratory infections. The 'virus' is, after all, called SARS or 'severe acute respiratory syndrome'. I highlighted in the spring of 2020 this phenomenon and quoted New York intensive care doctor Cameron Kyle-Sidell who posted a soon deleted YouTube video to say that they had been told to prepare to treat an infectious disease called 'Covid-19', but that was not what they were dealing with. Instead he likened the lung condition of the most severely ill patients to what you would expect with cabin depressurisation in a plane at 30,000 feet or someone dropped on the top of Everest without oxygen or acclimatisation. I have never said this is not happening to a small minority of alleged 'Covid' patients – I am saying this is not caused by a phantom 'contagious virus'. Indeed Kyle-Sidell said that 'Covid-19' was not the disease they were told was coming their way. 'We are operating under a medical paradigm that is untrue,' he said, and he believed they were treating the wrong disease: 'These people are being slowly starved of oxygen.' Patients would take off their oxygen masks in a state of fear and stress and while they were blue in the face on the brink of death. They did not look like patients dying of pneumonia. You can see why they don't want autopsies when their virus doesn't exist and there is another condition in some people that they don't wish to be uncovered. I should add here that

the 5G system of millimetre waves was being rapidly introduced around the world in 2020 and even more so now as they fire 5G at the Earth from satellites. At 60 gigahertz within the 5G range that frequency interacts with the oxygen molecule and stops people breathing in sufficient oxygen to be absorbed into the bloodstream. They are installing 5G in schools and hospitals. The world is not mad or anything. 5G can cause major changes to the lungs and blood as I detail in *The Answer* and these consequences are labelled 'Covid-19', the alleged symptoms of which can be caused by 5G and other electromagnetic frequencies as cells respond to radiation poisoning.

The 'Covid death' scam

Dr Scott Jensen, a Minnesota state senator and medical doctor, exposed 'Covid' Medicare payment incentives to hospitals and death certificate manipulation. He said he was sent a seven-page document by the US Department of Health 'coaching' him on how to fill out death certificates which had never happened before. The document said that he didn't need to have a laboratory test for 'Covid-19' to put that on the death certificate and that shocked him when death certificates are supposed to be about facts. Jensen described how doctors had been 'encouraged, if not pressured' to make a diagnosis of 'Covid-19' if they thought it was probable or '*presumed*'. No positive test was necessary – not that this would have mattered anyway. He said doctors were told to diagnose 'Covid' by symptoms when these were the same as colds, allergies, other respiratory problems, and certainly with influenza which 'disappeared' in the 'Covid' era. A common sniffle was enough to get the dreaded verdict. Ontario authorities decreed that a single care home resident with *one* symptom from a long list must lead to the isolation of the entire home. Other courageous doctors like Jensen made the same point about death figure manipulation and how deaths by other causes were falling while 'Covid-19 deaths' were rising at the same rate due to re-diagnosis. Their videos rarely survive long on YouTube with its Cult-supporting algorithms courtesy of CEO Susan Wojcicki and her bosses at Google. Figure-tampering was so glaring

and ubiquitous that even officials were letting it slip or outright saying it. UK chief scientific adviser Patrick Vallance said on one occasion that 'Covid' on the death certificate doesn't mean 'Covid' was the cause of death (so why the hell is it there?) and we had the rare sight of a BBC reporter telling the truth when she said: 'Someone could be successfully treated for Covid, in say April, discharged, and then in June, get run over by a bus and die ... That person would still be counted as a Covid death in England.' Yet the BBC and the rest of the world media went on repeating the case and death figures as if they were real. Illinois Public Health Director Dr Ngozi Ezike revealed the deceit while her bosses must have been clenching their buttocks:

If you were in a hospice and given a few weeks to live and you were then found to have Covid that would be counted as a Covid death. [There might be] a clear alternate cause, but it is still listed as a Covid death. So everyone listed as a Covid death doesn't mean that was the cause of the death, but that they had Covid at the time of death.

Yes, a 'Covid virus' never shown to exist and tested for with a test not testing for the 'virus'. In the first period of the pandemic hoax through the spring of 2020 the process began of designating almost everything a 'Covid' death and this has continued ever since. I sat in a restaurant one night listening to a loud conversation on the next table where a family was discussing in bewilderment how a relative who had no symptoms of 'Covid', and had died of a long-term problem, could have been diagnosed a death by the 'virus'. I could understand their bewilderment. If they read this book they will know why this medical fraud has been perpetrated the world over.

Some media truth shock

The media ignored the evidence of death certificate fraud until eventually one columnist did speak out when she saw it first-hand. Bel Mooney is a long-time national newspaper journalist in Britain currently working for the *Daily Mail*. Her article on February 19th, 2021, carried this headline: 'My dad Ted passed three Covid tests

and died of a chronic illness yet he's officially one of Britain's 120,000 victims of the virus and is far from alone ... so how many more are there?' She told how her 99-year-old father was in a care home with a long-standing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and vascular dementia. Maybe, but he was still aware enough to tell her from the start that there was no 'virus' and he refused the 'vaccine' for that reason. His death was not unexpected given his chronic health problems and Mooney said she was shocked to find that 'Covid-19' was declared the cause of death on his death certificate. She said this was a 'bizarre and unacceptable untruth' for a man with long-time health problems who had tested negative twice at the home for the 'virus'. I was also shocked by this story although not by what she said. I had been highlighting the death certificate manipulation for ten months. It was the confirmation that a professional full-time journalist only realised this was going on when it affected her directly and neither did she know that whether her dad tested positive or negative was irrelevant with the test not testing for the 'virus'. Where had she been? She said she did not believe in 'conspiracy theories' without knowing I'm sure that this and 'conspiracy theorists' were terms put into widespread circulation by the CIA in the 1960s to discredit those who did not accept the ridiculous official story of the Kennedy assassination. A blanket statement of 'I don't believe in conspiracy theories' is always bizarre. The dictionary definition of the term alone means the world is drowning in conspiracies. What she said was even more daft when her dad had just been affected by the 'Covid' conspiracy. Why else does she think that 'Covid-19' was going on the death certificates of people who died of something else?

To be fair once she saw from personal experience what was happening she didn't mince words. Mooney was called by the care home on the morning of February 9th to be told her father had died in his sleep. When she asked for the official cause of death what came back was 'Covid-19'. Mooney challenged this and was told there had been deaths from Covid on the dementia floor (confirmed by a test not testing for the 'virus') so they considered it 'reasonable

to assume'. 'But doctor,' Mooney rightly protested, 'an assumption isn't a diagnosis.' She said she didn't blame the perfectly decent and sympathetic doctor – 'he was just doing his job'. Sorry, but that's *bullshit*. He wasn't doing his job at all. He was putting a false cause of death on the death certificate and that is a criminal offence for which he should be brought to account and the same with the millions of doctors worldwide who have done the same. They were not doing their job they were following orders and that must not wash at new Nuremberg trials any more than it did at the first ones. Mooney's doctor was 'assuming' (presuming) as he was told to, but 'just following orders' makes no difference to his actions. A doctor's job is to serve the patient and the truth, not follow orders, but that's what they have done all over the world and played a central part in making the 'Covid' hoax possible with all its catastrophic consequences for humanity. Shame on them and they must answer for their actions. Mooney said her disquiet worsened when she registered her father's death by telephone and was told by the registrar there had been very many other cases like hers where 'the deceased' had not tested positive for 'Covid' yet it was recorded as the cause of death. The test may not matter, but those involved at their level *think* it matters and it shows a callous disregard for accurate diagnosis. The pressure to do this is coming from the top of the national 'health' pyramids which in turn obey the World Health Organization which obeys Gates and the Cult. Mooney said the registrar agreed that this must distort the national figures adding that 'the strangest thing is that every winter we record countless deaths from flu, and this winter there have been none. Not one!' She asked if the registrar thought deaths from flu were being misdiagnosed and lumped together with 'Covid' deaths. The answer was a 'puzzled yes'. Mooney said that the funeral director said the same about 'Covid' deaths which had nothing to do with 'Covid'. They had lost count of the number of families upset by this and other funeral companies in different countries have had the same experience. Mooney wrote:

The nightly shroud-waving and shocking close-ups of pain imposed on us by the TV news bewildered and terrified the population into eager compliance with lockdowns. We were invited to 'save the NHS' and to grieve for strangers – the real-life loved ones behind those shocking death counts. Why would the public imagine what I now fear, namely that the way Covid-19 death statistics are compiled might make the numbers seem greater than they are?

Oh, just a little bit – like 100 percent.

Do the maths

Mooney asked why a country would wish to skew its mortality figures by wrongly certifying deaths? What had been going on? Well, if you don't believe in conspiracies you will never find the answer which is that *it's a conspiracy*. She did, however, describe what she had discovered as a 'national scandal'. In reality it's a global scandal and happening everywhere. Pillars of this conspiracy were all put into place before the button was pressed with the Drosten PCR protocol and high amplifications to produce the cases and death certificate changes to secure illusory 'Covid' deaths. Mooney notes that normally two doctors were needed to certify a death, with one having to know the patient, and how the rules were changed in the spring of 2020 to allow one doctor to do this. In the same period 'Covid deaths' were decreed to be all cases where Covid-19 was put on the death certificate even without a positive test or any symptoms. Mooney asked: 'How many of the 30,851 (as of January 15) care home resident deaths with Covid-19 on the certificate (32.4 per cent of all deaths so far) were based on an assumption, like that of my father? And what has that done to our national psyche?' All of them is the answer to the first question and it has devastated and dismantled the national psyche, actually the global psyche, on a colossal scale. In the UK case and death data is compiled by organisations like Public Health England (PHE) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Mooney highlights the insane policy of counting a death from any cause as 'Covid-19' if this happens within 28 days of a positive test (with a test not testing for the 'virus') and she points out that ONS statistics reflect deaths 'involving Covid' 'or due to Covid' which meant in practice any

death where 'Covid-19' was mentioned on the death certificate. She described the consequences of this fraud:

Most people will accept the narrative they are fed, so panicky governments here and in Europe witnessed the harsh measures enacted in totalitarian China and jumped into lockdown. Headlines about Covid deaths tolled like the knell that would bring doomsday to us all. Fear stalked our empty streets. Politicians parroted the frankly ridiculous aim of 'zero Covid' and shut down the economy, while most British people agreed that lockdown was essential and (astonishingly to me, as a patriotic Brit) even wanted more restrictions.

For what? Lies on death certificates? Never mind the grim toll of lives ruined, suicides, schools closed, rising inequality, depression, cancelled hospital treatments, cancer patients in a torture of waiting, poverty, economic devastation, loneliness, families kept apart, and so on. How many lives have been lost as a direct result of lockdown?

She said that we could join in a national chorus of shock and horror at reaching the 120,000 death toll which was surely certain to have been totally skewed all along, but what about the human cost of lockdown justified by these 'death figures'? *The British Medical Journal* had reported a 1,493 percent increase in cases of children taken to Great Ormond Street Hospital with abusive head injuries alone and then there was the effect on families:

Perhaps the most shocking thing about all this is that families have been kept apart – and obeyed the most irrational, changing rules at the whim of government – because they believed in the statistics. They succumbed to fear, which his generation rejected in that war fought for freedom. Dad (God rest his soul) would be angry. And so am I.

Another theme to watch is that in the winter months when there are more deaths from all causes they focus on 'Covid' deaths and in the summer when the British Lung Foundation says respiratory disease plummets by 80 percent they rage on about 'cases'. Either way fascism on population is always the answer.

Nazi eugenics in the 21st century

Elderly people in care homes have been isolated from their families month after lonely month with no contact with relatives and grandchildren who were banned from seeing them. We were told

that lockdown fascism was to 'protect the vulnerable' like elderly people. At the same time Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders were placed on their medical files so that if they needed resuscitation it wasn't done and 'Covid-19' went on their death certificates. Old people were not being 'protected' they were being culled – murdered in truth. DNR orders were being decreed for disabled and young people with learning difficulties or psychological problems. The UK Care Quality Commission, a non-departmental body of the Department of Health and Social Care, found that 34 percent of those working in health and social care were pressured into placing 'do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation' orders on 'Covid' patients who suffered from disabilities and learning difficulties without involving the patient or their families in the decision. UK judges ruled that an elderly woman with dementia should have the DNA-manipulating 'Covid vaccine' against her son's wishes and that a man with severe learning difficulties should have the jab despite his family's objections. Never mind that many had already died. The judiciary always supports doctors and government in fascist dictatorships. They wouldn't dare do otherwise. A horrific video was posted showing fascist officers from Los Angeles police forcibly giving the 'Covid' shot to women with special needs who were screaming that they didn't want it. The same fascists are seen giving the jab to a sleeping elderly woman in a care home. This is straight out of the Nazi playbook. Hitler's Nazis committed mass murder of the mentally ill and physically disabled throughout Germany and occupied territories in the programme that became known as Aktion T4, or just T4. Sabbatian-controlled Hitler and his grotesque crazies set out to kill those they considered useless and unnecessary. The Reich Committee for the Scientific Registering of Hereditary and Congenital Illnesses registered the births of babies identified by physicians to have 'defects'. By 1941 alone more than 5,000 children were murdered by the state and it is estimated that in total the number of innocent people killed in Aktion T4 was between 275,000 and 300,000. Parents were told their children had been sent away for 'special treatment' never to return. It is rather pathetic to see claims about plans for new extermination camps being dismissed today

when the same force behind current events did precisely that 80 years ago. Margaret Sanger was a Cult operative who used 'birth control' to sanitise her programme of eugenics. Organisations she founded became what is now Planned Parenthood. Sanger proposed that 'the whole dysgenic population would have its choice of segregation or sterilization'. These included epileptics, 'feeble-minded', and prostitutes. Sanger opposed charity because it perpetuated 'human waste'. She reveals the Cult mentality and if anyone thinks that extermination camps are a 'conspiracy theory' their naivety is touching if breathtakingly stupid.

If you don't believe that doctors can act with callous disregard for their patients it is worth considering that doctors and medical staff agreed to put government-decreed DNR orders on medical files and do nothing when resuscitation is called for. I don't know what you call such people in your house. In mine they are Nazis from the Josef Mengele School of Medicine. Phenomenal numbers of old people have died worldwide from the effects of lockdown, depression, lack of treatment, the 'vaccine' (more later) and losing the will to live. A common response at the start of the manufactured pandemic was to remove old people from hospital beds and transfer them to nursing homes. The decision would result in a mass cull of elderly people in those homes through lack of treatment – *not* 'Covid'. Care home whistleblowers have told how once the 'Covid' era began doctors would not come to their homes to treat patients and they were begging for drugs like antibiotics that often never came. The most infamous example was ordered by New York governor Andrew Cuomo, brother of a moronic CNN host, who amazingly was given an Emmy Award for his handling of the 'Covid crisis' by the ridiculous Wokers that hand them out. Just how ridiculous could be seen in February, 2021, when a Department of Justice and FBI investigation began into how thousands of old people in New York died in nursing homes after being discharged from hospital to make way for 'Covid' patients on Cuomo's say-so – and how he and his staff covered up these facts. This couldn't have happened to a nicer psychopath. Even then there was a 'Covid' spin. Reports said that

thousands of old people who tested positive for 'Covid' in hospital were transferred to nursing homes to both die of 'Covid' and transmit it to others. No – they were in hospital because they were ill and the fact that they tested positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' is irrelevant. They were ill often with respiratory diseases ubiquitous in old people near the end of their lives. Their transfer out of hospital meant that their treatment stopped and many would go on to die.

They're old. Who gives a damn?

I have exposed in the books for decades the Cult plan to cull the world's old people and even to introduce at some point what they call a 'demise pill' which at a certain age everyone would take and be out of here by law. In March, 2021, Spain legalised euthanasia and assisted suicide following the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Canada on the Tiptoe to the demise pill. Treatment of old people by many 'care' homes has been a disgrace in the 'Covid' era. There are many, many, caring staff – I know some. There have, however, been legions of stories about callous treatment of old people and their families. Police were called when families came to take their loved ones home in the light of isolation that was killing them. They became prisoners of the state. Care home residents in insane, fascist Ontario, Canada, were not allowed to leave their *room* once the 'Covid' hoax began. UK staff have even wheeled elderly people away from windows where family members were talking with them. Oriana Criscuolo from Stockport in the English North West dropped off some things for her 80-year-old father who has Parkinson's disease and dementia and she wanted to wave to him through a ground-floor window. She was told that was 'illegal'. When she went anyway they closed the curtains in the middle of the day. Oriana said:

It's just unbelievable. I cannot understand how care home staff – people who are being paid to care – have become so uncaring. Their behaviour is inhumane and cruel. It's beyond belief.

She was right and this was not a one-off. What a way to end your life in such loveless circumstances. UK registered nurse Nicky Millen, a proper old school nurse for 40 years, said that when she started her career care was based on dignity, choice, compassion and empathy. Now she said 'the things that are important to me have gone out of the window.' She was appalled that people were dying without their loved ones and saying goodbye on iPads. Nicky described how a distressed 89-year-old lady stroked her face and asked her 'how many paracetamol would it take to finish me off'. Life was no longer worth living while not seeing her family. Nicky said she was humiliated in front of the ward staff and patients for letting the lady stroke her face and giving her a cuddle. Such is the dehumanisation that the 'Covid' hoax has brought to the surface. Nicky worked in care homes where patients told her they were being held prisoner. 'I want to live until I die', one said to her. 'I had a lady in tears because she hadn't seen her great-grandson.' Nicky was compassionate old school meeting psychopathic New Normal. She also said she had worked on a 'Covid' ward with no 'Covid' patients. Jewish writer Shai Held wrote an article in March, 2020, which was headlined 'The Staggering, Heartless Cruelty Toward the Elderly'. What he described was happening from the earliest days of lockdown. He said 'the elderly' were considered a group and not unique individuals (the way of the Woke). Shai Held said:

Notice how the all-too-familiar rhetoric of dehumanization works: 'The elderly' are bunched together as a faceless mass, all of them considered culprits and thus effectively deserving of the suffering the pandemic will inflict upon them. Lost entirely is the fact that the elderly are individual human beings, each with a distinctive face and voice, each with hopes and dreams, memories and regrets, friendships and marriages, loves lost and loves sustained.

'The elderly' have become another dehumanised group for which anything goes and for many that has resulted in cold disregard for their rights and their life. The distinctive face that Held talks about is designed to be deleted by masks until everyone is part of a faceless mass.

'War-zone' hospitals myth

Again and again medical professionals have told me what was really going on and how hospitals 'overrun like war zones' according to the media were virtually empty. The mantra from medical whistleblowers was please don't use my name or my career is over. Citizen journalists around the world sneaked into hospitals to film evidence exposing the 'war-zone' lie. They really *were* largely empty with closed wards and operating theatres. I met a hospital worker in my town on the Isle of Wight during the first lockdown in 2020 who said the only island hospital had never been so quiet. Lockdown was justified by the psychopaths to stop hospitals being overrun. At the same time that the island hospital was near-empty the military arrived here to provide *extra beds*. It was all propaganda to ramp up the fear to ensure compliance with fascism as were never-used temporary hospitals with thousands of beds known as Nightingales and never-used make-shift mortuaries opened by the criminal UK government. A man who helped to install those extra island beds attributed to the army said they were never used and the hospital was empty. Doctors and nurses 'stood around talking or on their phones, wandering down to us to see what we were doing'. There were no masks or social distancing. He accused the useless local island paper, the *County Press*, of 'pumping the fear as if our hospital was overrun and we only have one so it should have been'. He described ambulances parked up with crews outside in deck chairs. When his brother called an ambulance he was told there was a two-hour backlog which he called 'bullshit'. An old lady on the island fell 'and was in a bad way', but a caller who rang for an ambulance was told the situation wasn't urgent enough. Ambulance stations were working under capacity while people would hear ambulances with sirens blaring driving through the streets. When those living near the stations realised what was going on they would follow them as they left, circulated around an urban area with the sirens going, and then came back without stopping. All this was to increase levels of fear and the same goes for the 'ventilator shortage crisis' that cost tens of millions for hastily produced ventilators never to be used.

Ambulance crews that agreed to be exploited in this way for fear propaganda might find themselves a mirror. I wish them well with that. Empty hospitals were the obvious consequence of treatment and diagnoses of non-'Covid' conditions cancelled and those involved handed a death sentence. People have been dying at home from undiagnosed and untreated cancer, heart disease and other life-threatening conditions to allow empty hospitals to deal with a 'pandemic' that wasn't happening.

Death of the innocent

'War-zones' have been laying off nursing staff, even doctors where they can. There was no work for them. Lockdown was justified by saving lives and protecting the vulnerable they were actually killing with DNR orders and preventing empty hospitals being 'overrun'. In Britain the mantra of stay at home to 'save the NHS' was everywhere and across the world the same story was being sold when it was all lies. Two California doctors, Dan Erickson and Artin Massihi at Accelerated Urgent Care in Bakersfield, held a news conference in April, 2020, to say that intensive care units in California were 'empty, essentially', with hospitals shutting floors, not treating patients and laying off doctors. The California health system was working at minimum capacity 'getting rid of doctors because we just don't have the volume'. They said that people with conditions such as heart disease and cancer were not coming to hospital out of fear of 'Covid-19'. Their video was deleted by Susan Wojcicki's Cult-owned YouTube after reaching five million views. Florida governor Ron Desantis, who rejected the severe lockdowns of other states and is being targeted for doing so, said that in March, 2020, every US governor was given models claiming they would run out of hospital beds in days. That was never going to happen and the 'modellers' knew it. Deceit can be found at every level of the system. Urgent children's operations were cancelled including fracture repairs and biopsies to spot cancer. Eric Nicholls, a consultant paediatrician, said 'this is obviously concerning and we need to return to normal operating and to increase capacity as soon as possible'. Psychopaths

in power were rather less concerned *because* they are psychopaths. Deletion of urgent care and diagnosis has been happening all over the world and how many kids and others have died as a result of the actions of these cold and heartless lunatics dictating 'health' policy? The number must be stratospheric. Richard Sullivan, professor of cancer and global health at King's College London, said people feared 'Covid' more than cancer such was the campaign of fear. 'Years of lost life will be quite dramatic', Sullivan said, with 'a huge amount of avoidable mortality'. Sarah Woolnough, executive director for policy at Cancer Research UK, said there had been a 75 percent drop in urgent referrals to hospitals by family doctors of people with suspected cancer. Sullivan said that 'a lot of services have had to scale back – we've seen a dramatic decrease in the amount of elective cancer surgery'. Lockdown deaths worldwide has been absolutely fantastic with the *New York Post* reporting how data confirmed that 'lockdowns end more lives than they save':

There was a sharp decline in visits to emergency rooms and an increase in fatal heart attacks because patients didn't receive prompt treatment. Many fewer people were screened for cancer. Social isolation contributed to excess deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's.

Researchers predicted that the social and economic upheaval would lead to tens of thousands of "deaths of despair" from drug overdoses, alcoholism and suicide. As unemployment surged and mental-health and substance-abuse treatment programs were interrupted, the reported levels of anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts increased dramatically, as did alcohol sales and fatal drug overdoses.

This has been happening while nurses and other staff had so much time on their hands in the 'war-zones' that Tic-Tok dancing videos began appearing across the Internet with medical staff dancing around in empty wards and corridors as people died at home from causes that would normally have been treated in hospital.

Mentions in dispatches

One brave and truth-committed whistleblower was Louise Hampton, a call handler with the UK NHS who made a viral Internet video saying she had done 'fuck all' during the 'pandemic'

which was 'a load of bollocks'. She said that 'Covid-19' was rebranded flu and of course she lost her job. This is what happens in the medical and endless other professions now when you tell the truth. Louise filmed inside 'war-zone' accident and emergency departments to show they were empty and I mean *empty* as in no one there. The mainstream media could have done the same and blown the gaff on the whole conspiracy. They haven't to their eternal shame. Not that most 'journalists' seem capable of manifesting shame as with the psychopaths they slavishly repeat without question. The relative few who were admitted with serious health problems were left to die alone with no loved ones allowed to see them because of 'Covid' rules and they included kids dying without the comfort of mum and dad at their bedside while the evil behind this couldn't give a damn. It was all good fun to them. A Scottish NHS staff nurse publicly quit in the spring of 2021 saying: 'I can no longer be part of the lies and the corruption by the government.' She said hospitals 'aren't full, the beds aren't full, beds have been shut, wards have been shut'. Hospitals were never busy throughout 'Covid'. The staff nurse said that Nicola Sturgeon, tragically the leader of the Scottish government, was on television saying save the hospitals and the NHS – 'but the beds are empty' and 'we've not seen flu, we always see flu every year'. She wrote to government and spoke with her union Unison (the unions are Cult-compromised and *useless*, but nothing changed. Many of her colleagues were scared of losing their jobs if they spoke out as they wanted to. She said nursing staff were being affected by wearing masks all day and 'my head is splitting every shift from wearing a mask'. The NHS is part of the fascist tyranny and must be dismantled so we can start again with human beings in charge. (Ironically, hospitals were reported to be busier again when official 'Covid' cases *fell* in spring/summer of 2021 and many other conditions required treatment at the same time as *the fake vaccine rollout*.)

I will cover the 'Covid vaccine' scam in detail later, but it is another indicator of the sickening disregard for human life that I am highlighting here. The DNA-manipulating concoctions do not fulfil

the definition of a 'vaccine', have never been used on humans before and were given only emergency approval because trials were not completed and they continued using the unknowing public. The result was what a NHS senior nurse with responsibility for 'vaccine' procedure said was 'genocide'. She said the 'vaccines' were not 'vaccines'. They had not been shown to be safe and claims about their effectiveness by drug companies were 'poetic licence'. She described what was happening as a 'horrid act of human annihilation'. The nurse said that management had instigated a policy of not providing a Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) before people were 'vaccinated' even though health care professionals are supposed to do this according to protocol. Patients should also be told that they are taking part in an ongoing clinical trial. Her challenges to what is happening had seen her excluded from meetings and ridiculed in others. She said she was told to 'watch my step ... or I would find myself surplus to requirements'. The nurse, who spoke anonymously in fear of her career, said she asked her NHS manager why he/she was content with taking part in genocide against those having the 'vaccines'. The reply was that everyone had to play their part and to 'put up, shut up, and get it done'. Government was 'leaning heavily' on NHS management which was clearly leaning heavily on staff. This is how the global 'medical' hierarchy operates and it starts with the Cult and its World Health Organization.

She told the story of a doctor who had the Pfizer jab and when questioned had no idea what was in it. The doctor had never read the literature. We have to stop treating doctors as intellectual giants when so many are moral and medical pygmies. The doctor did not even know that the 'vaccines' were not fully approved or that their trials were ongoing. They were, however, asking their patients if they minded taking part in follow-ups for research purposes – yes, the *ongoing clinical trial*. The nurse said the doctor's ignorance was not rare and she had spoken to a hospital consultant who had the jab without any idea of the background or that the 'trials' had not been completed. Nurses and pharmacists had shown the same ignorance.

‘My NHS colleagues have forsaken their duty of care, broken their code of conduct – Hippocratic Oath – and have been brainwashed just the same as the majority of the UK public through propaganda ...’ She said she had not been able to recruit a single NHS colleague, doctor, nurse or pharmacist to stand with her and speak out. Her union had refused to help. She said that if the genocide came to light she would not hesitate to give evidence at a Nuremberg-type trial against those in power who could have affected the outcomes but didn’t.

And all for what?

To put the nonsense into perspective let’s say the ‘virus’ does exist and let’s go completely crazy and accept that the official manipulated figures for cases and deaths are accurate. *Even then* a study by Stanford University epidemiologist Dr John Ioannidis published on the World Health Organization website produced an average infection to fatality rate of ... *0.23 percent!* Ioannidis said: ‘If one could sample equally from all locations globally, the median infection fatality rate might even be substantially lower than the 0.23% observed in my analysis.’ For healthy people under 70 it was ... *0.05 percent!* This compares with the 3.4 percent claimed by the Cult-owned World Health Organization when the hoax was first played and maximum fear needed to be generated. An updated Stanford study in April, 2021, put the ‘infection’ to ‘fatality’ rate at just 0.15 percent. Another team of scientists led by Megan O’Driscoll and Henrik Salje studied data from 45 countries and published their findings on the Nature website. For children and young people the figure is so small it virtually does not register although authorities will be hyping dangers to the young when they introduce DNA-manipulating ‘vaccines’ for children. The O’Driscoll study produced an average infection-fatality figure of 0.003 for children from birth to four; 0.001 for 5 to 14; 0.003 for 15 to 19; and it was still only 0.456 up to 64. To claim that children must be ‘vaccinated’ to protect them from ‘Covid’ is an obvious lie and so there must be another reason and there is. What’s more the average age of a ‘Covid’ death is akin

to the average age that people die in general. The average age of death in England is about 80 for men and 83 for women. The average age of death from alleged 'Covid' is between 82 and 83. California doctors, Dan Erickson and Artin Massihi, said at their April media conference that projection models of millions of deaths had been 'woefully inaccurate'. They produced detailed figures showing that Californians had a 0.03 chance of dying from 'Covid' based on the number of people who tested positive (with a test not testing for the 'virus'). Erickson said there was a 0.1 percent chance of dying from 'Covid' in the *state* of New York, not just the city, and a 0.05 percent chance in Spain, a centre of 'Covid-19' hysteria at one stage. The Stanford studies supported the doctors' data with fatality rate estimates of 0.23 and 0.15 percent. How close are these figures to my estimate of *zero*? Death-rate figures claimed by the World Health Organization at the start of the hoax were some 15 times higher. The California doctors said there was no justification for lockdowns and the economic devastation they caused. Everything they had ever learned about quarantine was that you quarantine the *sick* and not the healthy. They had never seen this before and it made no medical sense.

Why in the in the light of all this would governments and medical systems the world over say that billions must go under house arrest; lose their livelihood; in many cases lose their mind, their health and their life; force people to wear masks dangerous to health and psychology; make human interaction and even family interaction a criminal offence; ban travel; close restaurants, bars, watching live sport, concerts, theatre, and any activity involving human togetherness and discourse; and closing schools to isolate children from their friends and cause many to commit suicide in acts of hopelessness and despair? The California doctors said lockdown consequences included increased child abuse, partner abuse, alcoholism, depression, and other impacts they were seeing every day. Who would do that to the entire human race if not mentally-ill psychopaths of almost unimaginable extremes like Bill Gates? We must face the reality of what we are dealing with and come out of

denial. Fascism and tyranny are made possible only by the target population submitting and acquiescing to fascism and tyranny. The whole of human history shows that to be true. Most people naively and unquestioning believed what they were told about a 'deadly virus' and meekly and weakly submitted to house arrest. Those who didn't believe it – at least in total – still submitted in fear of the consequences of not doing so. For the rest who wouldn't submit draconian fines have been imposed, brutal policing by psychopaths *for* psychopaths, and condemnation from the meek and weak who condemn the Pushbackers on behalf of the very force that has them, too, in its gun sights. 'Pathetic' does not even begin to suffice. Britain's brainless 'Health' Secretary Matt Hancock warned anyone lying to border officials about returning from a list of 'hotspot' countries could face a jail sentence of up to ten years which is more than for racially-aggravated assault, incest and attempting to have sex with a child under 13. Hancock is a lunatic, but he has the state apparatus behind him in a Cult-led chain reaction and the same with UK 'Vaccine Minister' Nadhim Zahawi, a prominent member of the mega-Cult secret society, Le Cercle, which featured in my earlier books. The Cult enforces its will on governments and medical systems; government and medical systems enforce their will on business and police; business enforces its will on staff who enforce it on customers; police enforce the will of the Cult on the population and play their essential part in creating a world of fascist control that their own children and grandchildren will have to live in their entire lives. It is a hierarchical pyramid of imposition and acquiescence and, yes indeed, of clinical insanity.

Does anyone bright enough to read this book have to ask what the answer is? I think not, but I will reveal it anyway in the fewest of syllables: Tell the psychos and their moronic lackeys to fuck off and let's get on with our lives. We are many – They are few.

CHAPTER SEVEN

War on your mind

One believes things because one has been conditioned to believe them

Aldous Huxley, Brave New World

I have described the 'Covid' hoax as a 'Psyop' and that is true in every sense and on every level in accordance with the definition of that term which is psychological warfare. Break down the 'Covid pandemic' to the foundation themes and it is psychological warfare on the human individual and collective mind.

The same can be said for the entire human belief system involving every subject you can imagine. Huxley was right in his contention that people believe what they are conditioned to believe and this comes from the repetition throughout their lives of the same falsehoods. They spew from government, corporations, media and endless streams of 'experts' telling you what the Cult wants you to believe and often believing it themselves (although *far* from always). 'Experts' are rewarded with 'prestigious' jobs and titles and as agents of perceptual programming with regular access to the media. The Cult has to control the narrative – control *information* – or they lose control of the vital, crucial, without-which-they-cannot-prevail public perception of reality. The foundation of that control today is the Internet made possible by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the incredibly sinister technological arm of the Pentagon. The Internet is the result of military technology.

DARPA openly brags about establishing the Internet which has been a long-term project to lasso the minds of the global population. I have said for decades the plan is to control information to such an extreme that eventually no one would see or hear anything that the Cult does not approve. We are closing in on that end with ferocious censorship since the 'Covid' hoax began and in my case it started back in the 1990s in terms of books and speaking venues. I had to create my own publishing company in 1995 precisely because no one else would publish my books even then. I think they're all still running.

Cult Internet

To secure total control of information they needed the Internet in which pre-programmed algorithms can seek out 'unclean' content for deletion and even stop it being posted in the first place. The Cult had to dismantle print and non-Internet broadcast media to ensure the transfer of information to the appropriate-named 'Web' – a critical expression of the *Cult* web. We've seen the ever-quicken demise of traditional media and control of what is left by a tiny number of corporations operating worldwide. Independent journalism in the mainstream is already dead and never was that more obvious than since the turn of 2020. The Cult wants all information communicated via the Internet to globally censor and allow the plug to be pulled any time. Lockdowns and forced isolation has meant that communication between people has been through electronic means and no longer through face-to-face discourse and discussion. Cult psychopaths have targeted the bars, restaurants, sport, venues and meeting places in general for this reason. None of this is by chance and it's to stop people gathering in any kind of privacy or number while being able to track and monitor all Internet communications and block them as necessary. Even private messages between individuals have been censored by these fascists that control Cult fronts like Facebook, Twitter, Google and YouTube which are all officially run by Sabbatian place-people and from the background by higher-level Sabbatian place people.

Facebook, Google, Amazon and their like were seed-funded and supported into existence with money-no-object infusions of funds either directly or indirectly from DARPA and CIA technology arm In-Q-Tel. The Cult plays the long game and prepares very carefully for big plays like 'Covid'. Amazon is another front in the psychological war and pretty much controls the global market in book sales and increasingly publishing. Amazon's limitless funds have deleted fantastic numbers of independent publishers to seize global domination on the way to deciding which books can be sold and circulated and which cannot. Moves in that direction are already happening. Amazon's leading light Jeff Bezos is the grandson of Lawrence Preston Gise who worked with DARPA predecessor ARPA. Amazon has big connections to the CIA and the Pentagon. The plan I have long described went like this:

1. Employ military technology to establish the Internet.
2. Sell the Internet as a place where people can freely communicate without censorship and allow that to happen until the Net becomes the central and irreversible pillar of human society. If the Internet had been highly censored from the start many would have rejected it.
3. Fund and manipulate major corporations into being to control the circulation of information on your Internet using cover stories about geeks in garages to explain how they came about. Give them unlimited funds to expand rapidly with no need to make a profit for years while non-Cult companies who need to balance the books cannot compete. You know that in these circumstances your Googles, YouTubes, Facebooks and Amazons are going to secure near monopolies by either crushing or buying up the opposition.
4. Allow freedom of expression on both the Internet and communication platforms to draw people in until the Internet is the central and irreversible pillar of human society and your communication corporations have reached a stage of near monopoly domination.
5. Then unleash your always-planned frenzy of censorship on the basis of 'where else are you going to go?' and continue to expand that until nothing remains that the Cult does not want its human targets to see.

The process was timed to hit the 'Covid' hoax to ensure the best chance possible of controlling the narrative which they knew they had to do at all costs. They were, after all, about to unleash a 'deadly virus' that didn't really exist. If you do that in an environment of free-flowing information and opinion you would be dead in the

water before you could say Gates is a psychopath. The network was in place through which the Cult-created-and-owned World Health Organization could dictate the 'Covid' narrative and response policy slavishly supported by Cult-owned Internet communication giants and mainstream media while those telling a different story were censored. Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter openly announced that they would do this. What else would we expect from Cult-owned operations like Facebook which former executives have confirmed set out to make the platform more addictive than cigarettes and coldly manipulates emotions of its users to sow division between people and groups and scramble the minds of the young? If Zuckerberg lives out the rest of his life without going to jail for crimes against humanity, and most emphatically against the young, it will be a travesty of justice. Still, no matter, cause and effect will catch up with him eventually and the same with Sergey Brin and Larry Page at Google with its CEO Sundar Pichai who fix the Google search results to promote Cult narratives and hide the opposition. Put the same key words into Google and other search engines like DuckDuckGo and you will see how different results can be. Wikipedia is another intensely biased 'encyclopaedia' which skews its content to the Cult agenda. YouTube links to Wikipedia's version of 'Covid' and 'climate change' on video pages in which experts in their field offer a different opinion (even that is increasingly rare with Wojcicki censorship). Into this 'Covid' silence-them network must be added government media censors, sorry 'regulators', such as Ofcom in the UK which imposed tyrannical restrictions on British broadcasters that had the effect of banning me from ever appearing. Just to debate with me about my evidence and views on 'Covid' would mean breaking the fascistic impositions of Ofcom and its CEO career government bureaucrat Melanie Dawes. Gutless British broadcasters tremble at the very thought of fascist Ofcom.

Psychos behind 'Covid'

The reason for the 'Covid' catastrophe in all its facets and forms can be seen by whom and what is driving the policies worldwide in such a coordinated way. Decisions are not being made to protect health, but to target psychology. The dominant group guiding and 'advising' government policy are not medical professionals. They are psychologists and behavioural scientists. Every major country has its own version of this phenomenon and I'll use the British example to show how it works. In many ways the British version has been affecting the wider world in the form of the huge behaviour manipulation network in the UK which operates in other countries. The network involves private companies, government, intelligence and military. The Cabinet Office is at the centre of the government 'Covid' Psyop and part-owns, with 'innovation charity' Nesta, the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) which claims to be independent of government but patently isn't. The BIT was established in 2010 and its job is to manipulate the psyche of the population to acquiesce to government demands and so much more. It is also known as the 'Nudge Unit', a name inspired by the 2009 book by two ultra-Zionists, Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler, called *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. The book, as with the Behavioural Insights Team, seeks to 'nudge' behaviour (manipulate it) to make the public follow patterns of action and perception that suit those in authority (the Cult). Sunstein is so skilled at this that he advises the World Health Organization and the UK Behavioural Insights Team and was Administrator of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Obama administration. Biden appointed him to the Department of Homeland Security – another ultra-Zionist in the fold to oversee new immigration laws which is another policy the Cult wants to control. Sunstein is desperate to silence anyone exposing conspiracies and co-authored a 2008 report on the subject in which suggestions were offered to ban 'conspiracy theorizing' or impose 'some kind of tax, financial or otherwise, on those who disseminate such theories'. I guess a psychiatrist's chair is out of the question?

Sunstein's mate Richard Thaler, an 'academic affiliate' of the UK Behavioural Insights Team, is a proponent of 'behavioural economics' which is defined as the study of 'the effects of psychological, cognitive, emotional, cultural and social factors on the decisions of individuals and institutions'. Study the effects so they can be manipulated to be what you want them to be. Other leading names in the development of behavioural economics are ultra-Zionists Daniel Kahneman and Robert J. Shiller and they, with Thaler, won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for their work in this field. The Behavioural Insights Team is operating at the heart of the UK government and has expanded globally through partnerships with several universities including Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, University College London (UCL) and Pennsylvania. They claim to have 'trained' (reframed) 20,000 civil servants and run more than 750 projects involving 400 randomised controlled trials in dozens of countries' as another version of mind reframers Common Purpose. BIT works from its office in New York with cities and their agencies, as well as other partners, across the United States and Canada – this is a company part-owned by the British government Cabinet Office. An executive order by President Cult-servant Obama established a US Social and Behavioral Sciences Team in 2015. They all have the same reason for being and that's to brainwash the population directly and by brainwashing those in positions of authority.

'Covid' mind game

Another prime aspect of the UK mind-control network is the 'independent' [joke] Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours (SPI-B) which 'provides behavioural science advice aimed at anticipating and helping people adhere to interventions that are recommended by medical or epidemiological experts'. That means manipulating public perception and behaviour to do whatever government tells them to do. It's disgusting and if they really want the public to be 'safe' this lot should all be under lock and key. According to the government website SPI-B consists of

'behavioural scientists, health and social psychologists, anthropologists and historians' and advises the Whitty-Vallance-led Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) which in turn advises the government on 'the science' (it doesn't) and 'Covid' policy. When politicians say they are being guided by 'the science' this is the rabble in each country they are talking about and that 'science' is dominated by behaviour manipulators to enforce government fascism through public compliance. The Behaviour Insight Team is headed by psychologist David Solomon Halpern, a visiting professor at King's College London, and connects with a national and global web of other civilian and military organisations as the Cult moves towards its goal of fusing them into one fascistic whole in every country through its 'Fusion Doctrine'. The behaviour manipulation network involves, but is not confined to, the Foreign Office; National Security Council; government communications headquarters (GCHQ); MI5; MI6; the Cabinet Office-based Media Monitoring Unit; and the Rapid Response Unit which 'monitors digital trends to spot emerging issues; including misinformation and disinformation; and identifies the best way to respond'.

There is also the 77th Brigade of the UK military which operates like the notorious Israeli military's Unit 8200 in manipulating information and discussion on the Internet by posing as members of the public to promote the narrative and discredit those who challenge it. Here we have the military seeking to manipulate *domestic* public opinion while the Nazis in government are fine with that. Conservative Member of Parliament Tobias Ellwood, an advocate of lockdown and control through 'vaccine passports', is a Lieutenant Colonel reservist in the 77th Brigade which connects with the military operation jHub, the 'innovation centre' for the Ministry of Defence and Strategic Command. jHub has also been involved with the civilian National Health Service (NHS) in 'symptom tracing' the population. The NHS is a key part of this mind control network and produced a document in December, 2020, explaining to staff how to use psychological manipulation with different groups and ages to get them to have the DNA-manipulating 'Covid vaccine'

that's designed to cumulatively rewrite human genetics. The document, called 'Optimising Vaccination Roll Out – Do's and Don'ts for all messaging, documents and "communications" in the widest sense', was published by NHS England and the NHS Improvement *Behaviour Change Unit* in partnership with Public Health England and Warwick Business School. I hear the mantra about 'save the NHS' and 'protect the NHS' when we need to scrap the NHS and start again. The current version is far too corrupt, far too anti-human and totally compromised by Cult operatives and their assets. UK government broadcast media censor Ofcom will connect into this web – as will the BBC with its tremendous Ofcom influence – to control what the public see and hear and dictate mass perception. Nuremberg trials must include personnel from all these organisations.

The fear factor

The 'Covid' hoax has led to the creation of the UK Cabinet Office-connected Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) which is officially described as providing 'expert advice on pandemics' using its independent [all Cult operations are 'independent'] analytical function to provide real-time analysis about infection outbreaks to identify and respond to outbreaks of Covid-19'. Another role is to advise the government on a response to spikes in infections – 'for example by closing schools or workplaces in local areas where infection levels have risen'. Put another way, promoting the Cult agenda. The Joint Biosecurity Centre is modelled on the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre which analyses intelligence to set 'terrorism threat levels' and here again you see the fusion of civilian and military operations and intelligence that has led to military intelligence producing documents about 'vaccine hesitancy' and how it can be combated. Domestic civilian matters and opinions should not be the business of the military. The Joint Biosecurity Centre is headed by Tom Hurd, director general of the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism from the establishment-to-its-fingertips Hurd family. His father is former Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd. How coincidental that Tom

Hurd went to the elite Eton College and Oxford University with Boris Johnson. Imperial College with its ridiculous computer modeller Neil Ferguson will connect with this gigantic web that will itself interconnect with similar set-ups in other major and not so major countries. Compared with this Cult network the politicians, be they Boris Johnson, Donald Trump or Joe Biden, are bit-part players 'following the science'. The network of psychologists was on the 'Covid' case from the start with the aim of generating maximum fear of the 'virus' to ensure compliance by the population. A government behavioural science group known as SPI-B produced a paper in March, 2020, for discussion by the main government science advisory group known as SAGE. It was headed 'Options for increasing adherence to social distancing measures' and it said the following in a section headed 'Persuasion':

- A substantial number of people still do not feel sufficiently personally threatened; it could be that they are reassured by the low death rate in their demographic group, although levels of concern may be rising. Having a good understanding of the risk has been found to be positively associated with adoption of COVID-19 social distancing measures in Hong Kong.
- The perceived level of personal threat needs to be increased among those who are complacent, using hard-hitting evaluation of options for increasing social distancing emotional messaging. To be effective this must also empower people by making clear the actions they can take to reduce the threat.
- Responsibility to others: There seems to be insufficient understanding of, or feelings of responsibility about, people's role in transmitting the infection to others ... Messaging about actions need to be framed positively in terms of protecting oneself and the community, and increase confidence that they will be effective.
- Some people will be more persuaded by appeals to play by the rules, some by duty to the community, and some to personal risk.

All these different approaches are needed. The messaging also needs to take account of the realities of different people's lives. Messaging needs to take account of the different motivational levers and circumstances of different people.

All this could be achieved the SPI-B psychologists said by *using the media to increase the sense of personal threat* which translates as terrify the shit out of the population, including children, so they all do what we want. That's not happened has it? Those excuses for 'journalists' who wouldn't know journalism if it bit them on the arse (the great majority) have played their crucial part in serving this Cult-government Psyop to enslave their own kids and grandkids. How they live with themselves I have no idea. The psychological war has been underpinned by constant government 'Covid' propaganda in almost every television and radio ad break, plus the Internet and print media, which has pounded out the fear with taxpayers footing the bill for their own programming. The result has been people terrified of a 'virus' that doesn't exist or one with a tiny fatality rate even if you believe it does. People walk down the street and around the shops wearing face-nappies damaging their health and psychology while others report those who refuse to be that naïve to the police who turn up in their own face-nappies. I had a cameraman come to my flat and he was so frightened of 'Covid' he came in wearing a mask and refused to shake my hand in case he caught something. He had – naïveitis – and the thought that he worked in the mainstream media was both depressing and made his behaviour perfectly explainable. The fear which has gripped the minds of so many and frozen them into compliance has been carefully cultivated by these psychologists who are really psychopaths. If lives get destroyed and a lot of young people commit suicide it shows our plan is working. SPI-B then turned to compulsion on the public to comply. 'With adequate preparation, rapid change can be achieved', it said. Some countries had introduced mandatory self-isolation on a wide scale without evidence of major public unrest and a large majority of the UK's population appeared to be supportive of more coercive measures with 64 percent of adults saying they would

support putting London under a lockdown (watch the 'polls' which are designed to make people believe that public opinion is in favour or against whatever the subject in hand).

For 'aggressive protective measures' to be effective, the SPI-B paper said, special attention should be devoted to those population groups that are more at risk. Translated from the Orwellian this means making the rest of population feel guilty for not protecting the 'vulnerable' such as old people which the Cult and its agencies were about to kill on an industrial scale with lockdown, lack of treatment and the Gates 'vaccine'. Psychopath psychologists sold their guilt-trip so comprehensively that Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis reported that children were apologising (from a distance) to their parents and grandparents for bringing 'Covid' into their homes and getting them sick. '... These apologies are just some of the last words that loved ones will ever hear as they die alone,' she said. Gut-wrenchingly Solis then used this childhood tragedy to tell children to stay at home and 'keep your loved ones alive'. Imagine heaping such potentially life-long guilt on a kid when it has absolutely nothing to do with them. These people are deeply disturbed and the psychologists behind this even more so.

Uncivil war – divide and rule

Professional mind-controllers at SPI-B wanted the media to increase a sense of responsibility to others (do as you're told) and promote 'positive messaging' for those actions while in contrast to invoke 'social disapproval' by the unquestioning, obedient, community of anyone with a mind of their own. Again the compliant Goebbels-like media obliged. This is an old, old, trick employed by tyrannies the world over throughout human history. You get the target population to keep the target population in line – *your* line. SPI-B said this could 'play an important role in preventing anti-social behaviour or discouraging failure to enact pro-social behaviour'. For 'anti-social' in the Orwellian parlance of SPI-B see any behaviour that government doesn't approve. SPI-B recommendations said that 'social disapproval' should be accompanied by clear messaging and

promotion of strong collective identity – hence the government and celebrity mantra of ‘we’re all in this together’. Sure we are. The mind doctors have such contempt for their targets that they think some clueless comedian, actor or singer telling them to do what the government wants will be enough to win them over. We have had UK comedian Lenny Henry, actor Michael Caine and singer Elton John wheeled out to serve the propagandists by urging people to have the DNA-manipulating ‘Covid’ non-‘vaccine’. The role of Henry and fellow black celebrities in seeking to coax a ‘vaccine’ reluctant black community into doing the government’s will was especially stomach-turning. An emotion-manipulating script and carefully edited video featuring these black ‘celebs’ was such an insult to the intelligence of black people and where’s the self-respect of those involved selling their souls to a fascist government agenda? Henry said he heard black people’s ‘legitimate worries and concerns’, but people must ‘trust the facts’ when they were doing exactly that by not having the ‘vaccine’. They had to include the obligatory reference to Black Lives Matter with the line ... ‘Don’t let coronavirus cost even more black lives – because we matter’. My god, it was pathetic. ‘I know the vaccine is safe and what it does.’ How? ‘I’m a comedian and it says so in my script.’

SPI-B said social disapproval needed to be carefully managed to avoid victimisation, scapegoating and misdirected criticism, but they knew that their ‘recommendations’ would lead to exactly that and the media were specifically used to stir-up the divide-and-conquer hostility. Those who conform like good little baa, baas, are praised while those who have seen through the tidal wave of lies are ‘Covidiot’. The awake have been abused by the fast asleep for not conforming to fascism and impositions that the awake know are designed to endanger their health, dehumanise them, and tear asunder the very fabric of human society. We have had the curtain-twitchers and morons reporting neighbours and others to the face-napped police for breaking ‘Covid rules’ with fascist police delighting in posting links and phone numbers where this could be done. The Cult cannot impose its will without a compliant police

and military or a compliant population willing to play their part in enslaving themselves and their kids. The words of a pastor in Nazi Germany are so appropriate today:

First they came for the socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me.

Those who don't learn from history are destined to repeat it and so many are.

'Covid' rules: Rewiring the mind

With the background laid out to this gigantic national and global web of psychological manipulation we can put 'Covid' rules into a clear and sinister perspective. Forget the claims about protecting health. 'Covid' rules are about dismantling the human mind, breaking the human spirit, destroying self-respect, and then putting Humpty Dumpty together again as a servile, submissive slave. Social isolation through lockdown and distancing have devastating effects on the human psyche as the psychological psychopaths well know and that's the real reason for them. Humans need contact with each other, discourse, closeness and touch, or they eventually, and literally, go crazy. Masks, which I will address at some length, fundamentally add to the effects of isolation and the Cult agenda to dehumanise and de-individualise the population. To do this while knowing – in fact *seeking* – this outcome is the very epitome of evil and psychologists involved in this *are* the epitome of evil. They must like all the rest of the Cult demons and their assets stand trial for crimes against humanity on a scale that defies the imagination. Psychopaths in uniform use isolation to break enemy troops and agents and make them subservient and submissive to tell what they know. The technique is rightly considered a form of torture and

torture is most certainly what has been imposed on the human population.

Clinically-insane American psychologist Harry Harlow became famous for his isolation experiments in the 1950s in which he separated baby monkeys from their mothers and imprisoned them for months on end in a metal container or 'pit of despair'. They soon began to show mental distress and depression as any idiot could have predicted. Harlow put other monkeys in steel chambers for three, six or twelve months while denying them any contact with animals or humans. He said that the effects of total social isolation for six months were 'so devastating and debilitating that we had assumed initially that twelve months of isolation would not produce any additional decrement'; but twelve months of isolation 'almost obliterated the animals socially'. This is what the Cult and its psychopaths are doing to you and your children. Even monkeys in partial isolation in which they were not allowed to form relationships with other monkeys became 'aggressive and hostile, not only to others, but also towards their own bodies'. We have seen this in the young as a consequence of lockdown. UK government psychopaths launched a public relations campaign telling people not to hug each other even after they received the 'Covid-19 vaccine' which we were told with more lies would allow a return to 'normal life'. A government source told *The Telegraph*: 'It will be along the lines that it is great that you have been vaccinated, but if you are going to visit your family and hug your grandchildren there is a chance you are going to infect people you love.' The source was apparently speaking from a secure psychiatric facility. Janet Lord, director of Birmingham University's Institute of Inflammation and Ageing, said that parents and grandparents should avoid hugging their children. Well, how can I put it, Ms Lord? Fuck off. Yep, that'll do.

Destroying the kids – where are the parents?

Observe what has happened to people enslaved and isolated by lockdown as suicide and self-harm has soared worldwide,

particularly among the young denied the freedom to associate with their friends. A study of 49,000 people in English-speaking countries concluded that almost half of young adults are at clinical risk of mental health disorders. A national survey in America of 1,000 currently enrolled high school and college students found that 5 percent reported attempting suicide during the pandemic. Data from the US CDC's National Syndromic Surveillance Program from January 1st to October 17th, 2020, revealed a *31 percent* increase in mental health issues among adolescents aged 12 to 17 compared with 2019. The CDC reported that America in general suffered the biggest drop in life expectancy since World War Two as it fell by a year in the first half of 2020 as a result of 'deaths of despair' – overdoses and suicides. Deaths of despair have leapt by more than 20 percent during lockdown and include the highest number of fatal overdoses ever recorded in a single year – 81,000. Internet addiction is another consequence of being isolated at home which lowers interest in physical activities as kids fall into inertia and what's the point? Children and young people are losing hope and giving up on life, sometimes literally. A 14-year-old boy killed himself in Maryland because he had 'given up' when his school district didn't reopen; an 11-year-old boy shot himself during a zoom class; a teenager in Maine succumbed to the isolation of the 'pandemic' when he ended his life after experiencing a disrupted senior year at school. Children as young as nine have taken their life and all these stories can be repeated around the world. Careers are being destroyed before they start and that includes those in sport in which promising youngsters have not been able to take part. The plan of the psycho-psychologists is working all right. Researchers at Cambridge University found that lockdowns cause significant harm to children's mental health. Their study was published in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, and followed 168 children aged between 7 and 11. The researchers concluded:

During the UK lockdown, children's depression symptoms have increased substantially, relative to before lockdown. The scale of this effect has direct relevance for the continuation of different elements of lockdown policy, such as complete or partial school closures ...

... Specifically, we observed a statistically significant increase in ratings of depression, with a medium-to-large effect size. Our findings emphasise the need to incorporate the potential impact of lockdown on child mental health in planning the ongoing response to the global pandemic and the recovery from it.

Not a chance when the Cult's psycho-psychologists were getting exactly what they wanted. The UK's Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has urged parents to look for signs of eating disorders in children and young people after a three to four fold increase. Specialists say the 'pandemic' is a major reason behind the rise. You don't say. The College said isolation from friends during school closures, exam cancellations, loss of extra-curricular activities like sport, and an increased use of social media were all contributory factors along with fears about the virus (psycho-psychologists again), family finances, and students being forced to quarantine. Doctors said young people were becoming severely ill by the time they were seen with 'Covid' regulations reducing face-to-face consultations. Nor is it only the young that have been devastated by the psychopaths. Like all bullies and cowards the Cult is targeting the young, elderly, weak and infirm. A typical story was told by a British lady called Lynn Parker who was not allowed to visit her husband in 2020 for the last ten and half months of his life 'when he needed me most' between March 20th and when he died on December 19th. This vacates the criminal and enters the territory of evil. The emotional impact on the immune system alone is immense as are the number of people of all ages worldwide who have died as a result of Cult-demanded, Gates-demanded, lockdowns.

Isolation is torture

The experience of imposing solitary confinement on millions of prisoners around the world has shown how a large percentage become 'actively psychotic and/or acutely suicidal'. Social isolation has been found to trigger 'a specific psychiatric syndrome, characterized by hallucinations; panic attacks; overt paranoia; diminished impulse control; hypersensitivity to external stimuli; and difficulties with thinking, concentration and memory'. Juan Mendez,

a United Nations rapporteur (investigator), said that isolation is a form of torture. Research has shown that even after isolation prisoners find it far more difficult to make social connections and I remember chatting to a shop assistant after one lockdown who told me that when her young son met another child again he had no idea how to act or what to do. Hannah Flanagan, Director of Emergency Services at Journey Mental Health Center in Dane County, Wisconsin, said: 'The specificity about Covid social distancing and isolation that we've come across as contributing factors to the suicides are really new to us this year.' But they are not new to those that devised them. They are getting the effect they want as the population is psychologically dismantled to be rebuilt in a totally different way. Children and the young are particularly targeted. They will be the adults when the full-on fascist AI-controlled technocracy is planned to be imposed and they are being prepared to meekly submit. At the same time older people who still have a memory of what life was like before – and how fascist the new normal really is – are being deleted. You are going to see efforts to turn the young against the old to support this geriatric genocide. Hannah Flanagan said the big increase in suicide in her county proved that social isolation is not only harmful, but deadly. Studies have shown that isolation from others is one of the main risk factors in suicide and even more so with women. Warnings that lockdown could create a 'perfect storm' for suicide were ignored. After all this was one of the *reasons* for lockdown. Suicide, however, is only the most extreme of isolation consequences. There are many others. Dr Dhruv Khullar, assistant professor of healthcare policy at Weill Cornell Medical College, said in a *New York Times* article in 2016 long before the fake 'pandemic':

A wave of new research suggests social separation is bad for us. Individuals with less social connection have disrupted sleep patterns, altered immune systems, more inflammation and higher levels of stress hormones. One recent study found that isolation increases the risk of heart disease by 29 percent and stroke by 32 percent. Another analysis that pooled data from 70 studies and 3.4 million people found that socially isolated individuals had a 30 percent higher risk of dying in the next seven years, and that this effect was largest in middle age.

Loneliness can accelerate cognitive decline in older adults, and isolated individuals are twice as likely to die prematurely as those with more robust social interactions. These effects start early: Socially isolated children have significantly poorer health 20 years later, even after controlling for other factors. All told, loneliness is as important a risk factor for early death as obesity and smoking.

There you have proof from that one article alone four years before 2020 that those who have enforced lockdown, social distancing and isolation knew what the effect would be and that is even more so with professional psychologists that have been driving the policy across the globe. We can go back even further to the years 2000 and 2003 and the start of a major study on the effects of isolation on health by Dr Janine Gronewold and Professor Dirk M. Hermann at the University Hospital in Essen, Germany, who analysed data on 4,316 people with an average age of 59 who were recruited for the long-term research project. They found that socially isolated people are more than 40 percent more likely to have a heart attack, stroke, or other major cardiovascular event and nearly 50 percent more likely to die from any cause. Given the financial Armageddon unleashed by lockdown we should note that the study found a relationship between increased cardiovascular risk and lack of financial support. After excluding other factors social isolation was still connected to a 44 percent increased risk of cardiovascular problems and a 47 percent increased risk of death by any cause. Lack of financial support was associated with a 30 percent increase in the risk of cardiovascular health events. Dr Gronewold said it had been known for some time that feeling lonely or lacking contact with close friends and family can have an impact on physical health and the study had shown that having strong social relationships is of high importance for heart health. Gronewold said they didn't understand yet why people who are socially isolated have such poor health outcomes, but this was obviously a worrying finding, particularly during these times of prolonged social distancing. Well, it can be explained on many levels. You only have to identify the point in the body where people feel loneliness and missing people they are parted from – it's in the centre of the chest where they feel the ache of loneliness and the ache of missing people. 'My heart aches for

you' ... 'My heart aches for some company.' I will explain this more in the chapter Escaping Wetiko, but when you realise that the body is the mind – they are expressions of each other – the reason why state of the mind dictates state of the body becomes clear.

American psychologist Ranjit Powar was highlighting the effects of lockdown isolation as early as April, 2020. She said humans have evolved to be social creatures and are wired to live in interactive groups. Being isolated from family, friends and colleagues could be unbalancing and traumatic for most people and could result in short or even long-term psychological and physical health problems. An increase in levels of anxiety, aggression, depression, forgetfulness and hallucinations were possible psychological effects of isolation. 'Mental conditions may be precipitated for those with underlying pre-existing susceptibilities and show up in many others without any pre-condition.' Powar said personal relationships helped us cope with stress and if we lost this outlet for letting off steam the result can be a big emotional void which, for an average person, was difficult to deal with. 'Just a few days of isolation can cause increased levels of anxiety and depression' – so what the hell has been the effect on the global population of *18 months* of this at the time of writing? Powar said: 'Add to it the looming threat of a dreadful disease being repeatedly hammered in through the media and you have a recipe for many shades of mental and physical distress.' For those with a house and a garden it is easy to forget that billions have had to endure lockdown isolation in tiny overcrowded flats and apartments with nowhere to go outside. The psychological and physical consequences of this are unimaginable and with lunatic and abusive partners and parents the consequences have led to tremendous increases in domestic and child abuse and alcoholism as people seek to shut out the horror. Ranjit Powar said:

Staying in a confined space with family is not all a rosy picture for everyone. It can be extremely oppressive and claustrophobic for large low-income families huddled together in small single-room houses. Children here are not lucky enough to have many board/electronic games or books to keep them occupied.

Add to it the deep insecurity of running out of funds for food and basic necessities. On the other hand, there are people with dysfunctional family dynamics, such as domineering, abusive or alcoholic partners, siblings or parents which makes staying home a period of trial. Incidence of suicide and physical abuse against women has shown a worldwide increase. Heightened anxiety and depression also affect a person's immune system, making them more susceptible to illness.

To think that Powar's article was published on April 11th, 2020.

Six-feet fantasy

Social (unsocial) distancing demanded that people stay six feet or two metres apart. UK government advisor Robert Dingwall from the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group said in a radio interview that the two-metre rule was 'conjured up out of nowhere' and was not based on science. No, it was not based on *medical* science, but it didn't come out of nowhere. The distance related to *psychological* science. Six feet/two metres was adopted in many countries and we were told by people like the criminal Anthony Fauci and his ilk that it was founded on science. Many schools could not reopen because they did not have the space for six-foot distancing. Then in March, 2021, after a year of six-feet 'science', a study published in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases* involving more than 500,000 students and almost 100,000 staff over 16 weeks revealed no significant difference in 'Covid' cases between six feet and three feet and Fauci changed his tune. Now three feet was okay. There is no difference between six feet and three *inches* when there is no 'virus' and they got away with six feet for psychological reasons for as long as they could. I hear journalists and others talk about 'unintended consequences' of lockdown. They are not *unintended* at all; they have been coldly-calculated for a specific outcome of human control and that's why super-psychopaths like Gates have called for them so vehemently. Super-psychopath psychologists have demanded them and psychopathic or clueless, spineless, politicians have gone along with them by 'following the science'. But it's not science at all. 'Science' is not what is; it's only what people can be manipulated to believe it is. The whole 'Covid' catastrophe is

founded on mind control. Three word or three statement mantras issued by the UK government are a well-known mind control technique and so we've had 'Stay home/protect the NHS/save lives', 'Stay alert/control the virus/save lives' and 'hands/face/space'. One of the most vocal proponents of extreme 'Covid' rules in the UK has been Professor Susan Michie, a member of the British Communist Party, who is not a medical professional. Michie is the director of the Centre for Behaviour Change at University College London. She is a *behavioural psychologist* and another filthy rich 'Marxist' who praised China's draconian lockdown. She was known by fellow students at Oxford University as 'Stalin's nanny' for her extreme Marxism. Michie is an influential member of the UK government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and behavioural manipulation groups which have dominated 'Covid' policy. She is a consultant adviser to the World Health Organization on 'Covid-19' and behaviour. Why the hell are lockdowns anything to do with her when they are claimed to be about health? Why does a behavioural psychologist from a group charged with changing the behaviour of the public want lockdown, human isolation and mandatory masks? Does that question really need an answer? Michie *absolutely* has to explain herself before a Nuremberg court when humanity takes back its world again and even more so when you see the consequences of masks that she demands are compulsory. This is a Michie classic:

The benefits of getting primary school children to wear masks is that regardless of what little degree of transmission is occurring in those age groups it could help normalise the practice. Young children wearing masks may be more likely to get their families to accept masks.

Those words alone should carry a prison sentence when you ponder on the callous disregard for children involved and what a statement it makes about the mind and motivations of Susan Michie. What a lovely lady and what she said there encapsulates the mentality of the psychopaths behind the 'Covid' horror. Let us compare what Michie said with a countrywide study in Germany published at [researchsquare.com](https://www.researchsquare.com) involving 25,000 school children and 17,854 health complaints submitted by parents. Researchers

found that masks are harming children physically, psychologically, and behaviourally with 24 health issues associated with mask wearing. They include: shortness of breath (29.7%); dizziness (26.4%); increased headaches (53%); difficulty concentrating (50%); drowsiness or fatigue (37%); and malaise (42%). Nearly a third of children experienced more sleep issues than before and a quarter developed new fears. Researchers found health issues and other impairments in 68 percent of masked children covering their faces for an average of 4.5 hours a day. Hundreds of those taking part experienced accelerated respiration, tightness in the chest, weakness, and short-term impairment of consciousness. A reminder of what Michie said again:

The benefits of getting primary school children to wear masks is that regardless of what little degree of transmission is occurring in those age groups it could help normalise the practice. Young children wearing masks may be more likely to get their families to accept masks.

Psychopaths in government and psychology now have children and young people – plus all the adults – wearing masks for hours on end while clueless teachers impose the will of the psychopaths on the young they should be protecting. What the hell are parents doing?

Cult lab rats

We have some schools already imposing on students microchipped buzzers that activate when they get 'too close' to their pals in the way they do with lab rats. How apt. To the Cult and its brain-dead servants our children *are* lab rats being conditioned to be unquestioning, dehumanised slaves for the rest of their lives. Children and young people are being weaned and frightened away from the most natural human instincts including closeness and touch. I have tracked in the books over the years how schools were banning pupils from greeting each other with a hug and the whole Cult-induced Me Too movement has terrified men and boys from a relaxed and natural interaction with female friends and work colleagues to the point where many men try never to be in a room

alone with a woman that's not their partner. Airhead celebrities have as always played their virtue-signalling part in making this happen with their gross exaggeration. For every monster like Harvey Weinstein there are at least tens of thousands of men that don't treat women like that; but everyone must be branded the same and policy changed for them as well as the monster. I am going to be using the word 'dehumanise' many times in this chapter because that is what the Cult is seeking to do and it goes very deep as we shall see. Don't let them kid you that social distancing is planned to end one day. That's not the idea. We are seeing more governments and companies funding and producing wearable gadgets to keep people apart and they would not be doing that if this was meant to be short-term. A tech start-up company backed by GCHQ, the British Intelligence and military surveillance headquarters, has created a social distancing wrist sensor that alerts people when they get too close to others. The CIA has also supported tech companies developing similar devices. The wearable sensor was developed by Tended, one of a number of start-up companies supported by GCHQ (see the CIA and DARPA). The device can be worn on the wrist or as a tag on the waistband and will vibrate whenever someone wearing the device breaches social distancing and gets anywhere near natural human contact. The company had a lucky break in that it was developing a distancing sensor when the 'Covid' hoax arrived which immediately provided a potentially enormous market. How fortunate. The government in big-time Cult-controlled Ontario in Canada is investing \$2.5 million in wearable contact tracing technology that 'will alert users if they may have been exposed to the Covid-19 in the workplace and will beep or vibrate if they are within six feet of another person'. Facedrive Inc., the technology company behind this, was founded in 2016 with funding from the Ontario Together Fund and obviously they, too, had a prophet on the board of directors. The human surveillance and control technology is called TraceSCAN and would be worn by the human cyborgs in places such as airports, workplaces, construction sites, care homes and ... *schools*.

I emphasise schools with children and young people the prime targets. You know what is planned for society as a whole if you keep your eyes on the schools. They have always been places where the state program the next generation of slaves to be its compliant worker-ants – or Woker-ants these days; but in the mist of the ‘Covid’ madness they have been transformed into mind laboratories on a scale never seen before. Teachers and head teachers are just as programmed as the kids – often more so. Children are kept apart from human interaction by walk lanes, classroom distancing, staggered meal times, masks, and the rolling-out of buzzer systems. Schools are now physically laid out as a laboratory maze for lab-rats. Lunatics at a school in Anchorage, Alaska, who should be prosecuted for child abuse, took away desks and forced children to kneel (know your place) on a mat for five hours a day while wearing a mask and using their chairs as a desk. How this was supposed to impact on a ‘virus’ only these clinically insane people can tell you and even then it would be clap-trap. The school banned recess (interaction), art classes (creativity), and physical exercise (getting body and mind moving out of inertia). Everyone behind this outrage should be in jail or better still a mental institution. The behavioural manipulators are all for this dystopian approach to schools. Professor Susan Michie, the mind-doctor and British Communist Party member, said it was wrong to say that schools were safe. They had to be made so by ‘distancing’, masks and ventilation (sitting all day in the cold). I must ask this lady round for dinner on a night I know I am going to be out and not back for weeks. She probably wouldn’t be able to make it, anyway, with all the visits to her own psychologist she must have block-booked.

Masking identity

I know how shocking it must be for you that a behaviour manipulator like Michie wants everyone to wear masks which have long been a feature of mind-control programs like the infamous MKUltra in the United States, but, there we are. We live and learn. I spent many years from 1996 to right across the millennium

researching mind control in detail on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere. I met a large number of mind-control survivors and many had been held captive in body and mind by MKUltra. MK stands for mind-control, but employs the German spelling in deference to the Nazis spirited out of Germany at the end of World War Two by Operation Paperclip in which the US authorities, with help from the Vatican, transported Nazi mind-controllers and engineers to America to continue their work. Many of them were behind the creation of NASA and they included Nazi scientist and SS officer Wernher von Braun who swapped designing V-2 rockets to bombard London with designing the Saturn V rockets that powered the NASA moon programme's Apollo craft. I think I may have mentioned that the Cult has no borders. Among Paperclip escapees was Josef Mengele, the Angel of Death in the Nazi concentration camps where he conducted mind and genetic experiments on children often using twins to provide a control twin to measure the impact of his 'work' on the other. If you want to observe the Cult mentality in all its extremes of evil then look into the life of Mengele. I have met many people who suffered mercilessly under Mengele in the United States where he operated under the name Dr Greene and became a stalwart of MKUltra programming and torture. Among his locations was the underground facility in the Mojave Desert in California called the China Lake Naval Weapons Station which is almost entirely below the surface. My books *The Biggest Secret*, *Children of the Matrix* and *The Perception Deception* have the detailed background to MKUltra.

The best-known MKUltra survivor is American Cathy O'Brien. I first met her and her late partner Mark Phillips at a conference in Colorado in 1996. Mark helped her escape and deprogram from decades of captivity in an offshoot of MKUltra known as Project Monarch in which 'sex slaves' were provided for the rich and famous including Father George Bush, Dick Cheney and the Clintons. Read Cathy and Mark's book *Trance-Formation of America* and if you are new to this you will be shocked to the core. I read it in 1996 shortly before, with the usual synchronicity of my life, I found

myself given a book table at the conference right next to hers. MKUltra never ended despite being very publicly exposed (only a small part of it) in the 1970s and continues in other guises. I am still in touch with Cathy. She contacted me during 2020 after masks became compulsory in many countries to tell me how they were used as part of MKUltra programming. I had been observing 'Covid regulations' and the relationship between authority and public for months. I saw techniques that I knew were employed on individuals in MKUltra being used on the global population. I had read many books and manuals on mind control including one called *Silent Weapons for Quiet Wars* which came to light in the 1980s and was a guide on how to perceptually program on a mass scale. 'Silent Weapons' refers to mind-control. I remembered a line from the manual as governments, medical authorities and law enforcement agencies have so obviously talked to – or rather at – the adult population since the 'Covid' hoax began as if they are children. The document said:

If a person is spoken to by a T.V. advertiser as if he were a twelve-year-old, then, due to suggestibility, he will, with a certain probability, respond or react to that suggestion with the uncritical response of a twelve-year-old and will reach in to his economic reservoir and deliver its energy to buy that product on impulse when he passes it in the store.

That's why authority has spoken to adults like children since all this began.

Why did Michael Jackson wear masks?

Every aspect of the 'Covid' narrative has mind-control as its central theme. Cathy O'Brien wrote an article for davidicke.com about the connection between masks and mind control. Her daughter Kelly who I first met in the 1990s was born while Cathy was still held captive in MKUltra. Kelly was forced to wear a mask as part of her programming from the age of *two* to dehumanise her, target her sense of individuality and reduce the amount of oxygen her brain and body received. *Bingo*. This is the real reason for compulsory

masks, why they have been enforced en masse, and why they seek to increase the number they demand you wear. First one, then two, with one disgraceful alleged 'doctor' recommending four which is nothing less than a death sentence. Where and how often they must be worn is being expanded for the purpose of mass mind control and damaging respiratory health which they can call 'Covid-19'. Canada's government headed by the man-child Justin Trudeau, says it's fine for children of two and older to wear masks. An insane 'study' in Italy involving just 47 children concluded there was no problem for babies as young as *four months* wearing them. Even after people were 'vaccinated' they were still told to wear masks by the criminal that is Anthony Fauci. Cathy wrote that mandating masks is allowing the authorities literally to control the air we breathe which is what was done in MKUltra. You might recall how the singer Michael Jackson wore masks and there is a reason for that. He was subjected to MKUltra mind control through Project Monarch and his psyche was scrambled by these simpletons. Cathy wrote:

In MKUltra Project Monarch mind control, Michael Jackson had to wear a mask to silence his voice so he could not reach out for help. Remember how he developed that whisper voice when he wasn't singing? Masks control the mind from the outside in, like the redefining of words is doing. By controlling what we can and cannot say for fear of being labeled racist or beaten, for example, it ultimately controls thought that drives our words and ultimately actions (or lack thereof).

Likewise, a mask muffles our speech so that we are not heard, which controls voice ... words ... mind. This is Mind Control. Masks are an obvious mind control device, and I am disturbed so many people are complying on a global scale. Masks depersonalize while making a person feel as though they have no voice. It is a barrier to others. People who would never choose to comply but are forced to wear a mask in order to keep their job, and ultimately their family fed, are compromised. They often feel shame and are subdued. People have stopped talking with each other while media controls the narrative.

The 'no voice' theme has often become literal with train passengers told not to speak to each other in case they pass on the 'virus', singing banned for the same reason and bonkers California officials telling people riding roller coasters that they cannot shout and scream. Cathy said she heard every day from healed MKUltra survivors who cannot wear a mask without flashing back on ways

their breathing was controlled – ‘from ball gags and penises to water boarding’. She said that through the years when she saw images of people in China wearing masks ‘due to pollution’ that it was really to control their oxygen levels. ‘I knew it was as much of a population control mechanism of depersonalisation as are burkas’, she said. Masks are another Chinese communist/fascist method of control that has been swept across the West as the West becomes China at lightning speed since we entered 2020.

Mask-19

There are other reasons for mandatory masks and these include destroying respiratory health to call it ‘Covid-19’ and stunting brain development of children and the young. Dr Margarite Griesz-Brisson MD, PhD, is a Consultant Neurologist and Neurophysiologist and the Founder and Medical Director of the London Neurology and Pain Clinic. Her CV goes down the street and round the corner. She is clearly someone who cares about people and won’t parrot the propaganda. Griesz-Brisson has a PhD in pharmacology, with special interest in neurotoxicology, environmental medicine, neuroregeneration and neuroplasticity (the way the brain can change in the light of information received). She went public in October, 2020, with a passionate warning about the effects of mask-wearing laws:

The reinhalation of our exhaled air will without a doubt create oxygen deficiency and a flooding of carbon dioxide. We know that the human brain is very sensitive to oxygen deprivation. There are nerve cells for example in the hippocampus that can’t be longer than 3 minutes without oxygen – they cannot survive. The acute warning symptoms are headaches, drowsiness, dizziness, issues in concentration, slowing down of reaction time – reactions of the cognitive system.

Oh, I know, let’s tell bus, truck and taxi drivers to wear them and people working machinery. How about pilots, doctors and police? Griesz-Brisson makes the important point that while the symptoms she mentions may fade as the body readjusts this does not alter the fact that people continue to operate in oxygen deficit with long list of

potential consequences. She said it was well known that neurodegenerative diseases take years or decades to develop. 'If today you forget your phone number, the breakdown in your brain would have already started 20 or 30 years ago.' She said degenerative processes in your brain are getting amplified as your oxygen deprivation continues through wearing a mask. Nerve cells in the brain are unable to divide themselves normally in these circumstances and lost nerve cells will no longer be regenerated. 'What is gone is gone.' Now consider that people like shop workers and *schoolchildren* are wearing masks for hours every day. What in the name of sanity is going to be happening to them? 'I do not wear a mask, I need my brain to think', Griesz-Brisson said, 'I want to have a clear head when I deal with my patients and not be in a carbon dioxide-induced anaesthesia'. If you are told to wear a mask anywhere ask the organisation, police, store, whatever, for their risk assessment on the dangers and negative effects on mind and body of enforcing mask-wearing. They won't have one because it has never been done not even by government. All of them must be subject to class-action lawsuits as the consequences come to light. They don't do mask risk assessments for an obvious reason. They know what the conclusions would be and independent scientific studies that *have* been done tell a horror story of consequences.

'Masks are criminal'

Dr Griesz-Brisson said that for children and adolescents, masks are an absolute no-no. They had an extremely active and adaptive immune system and their brain was incredibly active with so much to learn. 'The child's brain, or the youth's brain, is thirsting for oxygen.' The more metabolically active an organ was, the more oxygen it required; and in children and adolescents every organ was metabolically active. Griesz-Brisson said that to deprive a child's or adolescent's brain of oxygen, or to restrict it in any way, was not only dangerous to their health, it was absolutely criminal. 'Oxygen deficiency inhibits the development of the brain, and the damage that has taken place as a result CANNOT be reversed.' Mind

manipulators of MKUltra put masks on two-year-olds they wanted to neurologically rewire and you can see why. Griesz-Brisson said a child needs the brain to learn and the brain needs oxygen to function. 'We don't need a clinical study for that. This is simple, indisputable physiology.' Consciously and purposely induced oxygen deficiency was an absolutely deliberate health hazard, and an absolute medical contraindication which means that 'this drug, this therapy, this method or measure should not be used, and is not allowed to be used'. To coerce an entire population to use an absolute medical contraindication by force, she said, there had to be definite and serious reasons and the reasons must be presented to competent interdisciplinary and independent bodies to be verified and authorised. She had this warning of the consequences that were coming if mask wearing continued:

When, in ten years, dementia is going to increase exponentially, and the younger generations couldn't reach their god-given potential, it won't help to say 'we didn't need the masks'. I know how damaging oxygen deprivation is for the brain, cardiologists know how damaging it is for the heart, pulmonologists know how damaging it is for the lungs. Oxygen deprivation damages every single organ. Where are our health departments, our health insurance, our medical associations? It would have been their duty to be vehemently against the lockdown and to stop it and stop it from the very beginning.

Why do the medical boards issue punishments to doctors who give people exemptions? Does the person or the doctor seriously have to prove that oxygen deprivation harms people? What kind of medicine are our doctors and medical associations representing? Who is responsible for this crime? The ones who want to enforce it? The ones who let it happen and play along, or the ones who don't prevent it?

All of the organisations and people she mentions there either answer directly to the Cult or do whatever hierarchical levels above them tell them to do. The outcome of both is the same. 'It's not about masks, it's not about viruses, it's certainly not about your health', Griesz-Brisson said. 'It is about much, much more. I am not participating. I am not afraid.' They were taking our air to breathe and there was no unfounded medical exemption from face masks. Oxygen deprivation was dangerous for every single brain. It had to be the free decision of every human being whether they want to

wear a mask that was absolutely ineffective to protect themselves from a virus. She ended by rightly identifying where the responsibility lies for all this:

The imperative of the hour is personal responsibility. We are responsible for what we think, not the media. We are responsible for what we do, not our superiors. We are responsible for our health, not the World Health Organization. And we are responsible for what happens in our country, not the government.

Halle-bloody-lujah.

But surgeons wear masks, right?

Independent studies of mask-wearing have produced a long list of reports detailing mental, emotional and physical dangers. What a definition of insanity to see police officers imposing mask-wearing on the public which will cumulatively damage their health while the police themselves wear masks that will cumulatively damage *their* health. It's utter madness and both public and police do this because 'the government says so' – yes a government of brain-donor idiots like UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock reading the 'follow the science' scripts of psychopathic, lunatic psychologists. The response you get from Stockholm syndrome sufferers defending the very authorities that are destroying them and their families is that 'surgeons wear masks'. This is considered the game, set and match that they must work and don't cause oxygen deficit. Well, actually, scientific studies have shown that they *do* and oxygen levels are monitored in operating theatres to compensate. Surgeons wear masks to stop spittle and such like dropping into open wounds – not to stop 'viral particles' which are so miniscule they can only be seen through an electron microscope. Holes in the masks are significantly bigger than 'viral particles' and if you sneeze or cough they will breach the mask. I watched an incredibly disingenuous 'experiment' that claimed to prove that masks work in catching 'virus' material from the mouth and nose. They did this with a slow motion camera and the mask did block big stuff which stayed inside the mask and

against the face to be breathed in or cause infections on the face as we have seen with many children. 'Viral particles', however, would never have been picked up by the camera as they came through the mask when they are far too small to be seen. The 'experiment' was therefore disingenuous *and* useless.

Studies have concluded that wearing masks in operating theatres (and thus elsewhere) make no difference to preventing infection while the opposite is true with toxic shite building up in the mask and this had led to an explosion in tooth decay and gum disease dubbed by dentists 'mask mouth'. You might have seen the Internet video of a furious American doctor urging people to take off their masks after a four-year-old patient had been rushed to hospital the night before and nearly died with a lung infection that doctors sourced to mask wearing. A study in the journal *Cancer Discovery* found that inhalation of harmful microbes can contribute to advanced stage lung cancer in adults and long-term use of masks can help breed dangerous pathogens. Microbiologists have said frequent mask wearing creates a moist environment in which microbes can grow and proliferate before entering the lungs. The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, or CADTH, a Canadian national organisation that provides research and analysis to healthcare decision-makers, said this as long ago as 2013 in a report entitled 'Use of Surgical Masks in the Operating Room: A Review of the Clinical Effectiveness and Guidelines'. It said:

- No evidence was found to support the use of surgical face masks to reduce the frequency of surgical site infections
- No evidence was found on the effectiveness of wearing surgical face masks to protect staff from infectious material in the operating room.
- Guidelines recommend the use of surgical face masks by staff in the operating room to protect both operating room staff and patients (despite the lack of evidence).

We were told that the world could go back to 'normal' with the arrival of the 'vaccines'. When they came, fraudulent as they are, the story changed as I knew that it would. We are in the midst of transforming 'normal', not going back to it. Mary Ramsay, head of immunisation at Public Health England, echoed the words of US criminal Anthony Fauci who said masks and other regulations must stay no matter if people are vaccinated. The Fauci idiot continued to wear two masks – different colours so both could be clearly seen – after he *claimed* to have been vaccinated. Senator Rand Paul told Fauci in one exchange that his double-masks were 'theatre' and he was right. It's all theatre. Mary Ramsay back-tracked on the vaccine-return-to-normal theme when she said the public may need to wear masks and social-distance for years despite the jabs. 'People have got used to those lower-level restrictions now, and [they] can live with them', she said telling us what the idea has been all along. 'The vaccine does not give you a pass, even if you have had it, you must continue to follow all the guidelines' said a Public Health England statement which reneged on what we had been told before and made having the 'vaccine' irrelevant to 'normality' even by the official story. Spain's fascist government trumped everyone by passing a law mandating the wearing of masks on the beach and even when swimming in the sea. The move would have devastated what's left of the Spanish tourist industry, posed potential breathing dangers to swimmers and had Northern European sunbathers walking around with their forehead brown and the rest of their face white as a sheet. The ruling was so crazy that it had to be retracted after pressure from public and tourist industry, but it confirmed where the Cult wants to go with masks and how clinically insane authority has become. The determination to make masks permanent and hide the serious dangers to body and mind can be seen in the censorship of scientist Professor Denis Rancourt by Bill Gates-funded academic publishing website ResearchGate over his papers exposing the dangers and uselessness of masks. Rancourt said:

ResearchGate today has permanently locked my account, which I have had since 2015. Their reasons graphically show the nature of their attack against democracy, and their corruption of

science ... By their obscene non-logic, a scientific review of science articles reporting on harms caused by face masks has a 'potential to cause harm'. No criticism of the psychological device (face masks) is tolerated, if the said criticism shows potential to influence public policy.

This is what happens in a fascist world.

Where are the 'greens' (again)?

Other dangers of wearing masks especially regularly relate to the inhalation of minute plastic fibres into the lungs and the deluge of discarded masks in the environment and oceans. Estimates predicted that more than 1.5 billion disposable masks will end up in the world's oceans every year polluting the water with tons of plastic and endangering marine wildlife. Studies project that humans are using 129 billion face masks each month worldwide – about three million a minute. Most are disposable and made from plastic, non-biodegradable microfibers that break down into smaller plastic particles that become widespread in ecosystems. They are littering cities, clogging sewage channels and turning up in bodies of water. I have written in other books about the immense amounts of microplastics from endless sources now being absorbed into the body. Rolf Halden, director of the Arizona State University (ASU) Biodesign Center for Environmental Health Engineering, was the senior researcher in a 2020 study that analysed 47 human tissue samples and found microplastics in all of them. 'We have detected these chemicals of plastics in every single organ that we have investigated', he said. I wrote in *The Answer* about the world being deluged with microplastics. A study by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) found that people are consuming on average every week some 2,000 tiny pieces of plastic mostly through water and also through marine life and the air. Every year humans are ingesting enough microplastics to fill a heaped dinner plate and in a life-time of 79 years it is enough to fill two large waste bins. Marco Lambertini, WWF International director general said: 'Not only are plastics polluting our oceans and waterways and killing marine life – it's in all of us and we can't escape consuming plastics,' American

geologists found tiny plastic fibres, beads and shards in rainwater samples collected from the remote slopes of the Rocky Mountain National Park near Denver, Colorado. Their report was headed: 'It is raining plastic.' Rachel Adams, senior lecturer in Biomedical Science at Cardiff Metropolitan University, said that among health consequences are internal inflammation and immune responses to a 'foreign body'. She further pointed out that microplastics become carriers of toxins including mercury, pesticides and dioxins (a known cause of cancer and reproductive and developmental problems). These toxins accumulate in the fatty tissues once they enter the body through microplastics. Now this is being compounded massively by people putting plastic on their face and throwing it away.

Workers exposed to polypropylene plastic fibres known as 'flock' have developed 'flock worker's lung' from inhaling small pieces of the flock fibres which can damage lung tissue, reduce breathing capacity and exacerbate other respiratory problems. *Now ...* commonly used surgical masks have three layers of melt-blown textiles made of ... polypropylene. We have billions of people putting these microplastics against their mouth, nose and face for hours at a time day after day in the form of masks. How does anyone think that will work out? I mean – what could possibly go wrong? We posted a number of scientific studies on this at davidicke.com, but when I went back to them as I was writing this book the links to the science research website where they were hosted were dead. Anything that challenges the official narrative in any way is either censored or vilified. The official narrative is so unsupportable by the evidence that only deleting the truth can protect it. A study by Chinese scientists still survived – with the usual twist which it why it was still active, I guess. Yes, they found that virtually all the masks they tested increased the daily intake of microplastic fibres, but people should still wear them because the danger from the 'virus' was worse said the crazy 'team' from the Institute of Hydrobiology in Wuhan. Scientists first discovered microplastics in lung tissue of some patients who died of lung cancer

in the 1990s. Subsequent studies have confirmed the potential health damage with the plastic degrading slowly and remaining in the lungs to accumulate in volume. Wuhan researchers used a machine simulating human breathing to establish that masks shed up to nearly 4,000 microplastic fibres in a month with reused masks producing more. Scientists said some masks are laced with toxic chemicals and a variety of compounds seriously restricted for both health and environmental reasons. They include cobalt (used in blue dye) and formaldehyde known to cause watery eyes, burning sensations in the eyes, nose, and throat, plus coughing, wheezing and nausea. No – that must be ‘Covid-19’.

Mask ‘worms’

There is another and potentially even more sinister content of masks. Mostly new masks of different makes filmed under a microscope around the world have been found to contain strange black fibres or ‘worms’ that appear to move or ‘crawl’ by themselves and react to heat and water. The nearest I have seen to them are the self-replicating fibres that are pulled out through the skin of those suffering from Morgellons disease which has been connected to the phenomena of ‘chemtrails’ which I will bring into the story later on. Morgellons fibres continue to grow outside the body and have a form of artificial intelligence. Black ‘worm’ fibres in masks have that kind of feel to them and there is a nanotechnology technique called ‘worm micelles’ which carry and release drugs or anything else you want to deliver to the body. For sure the suppression of humanity by mind altering drugs is the Cult agenda big time and the more excuses they can find to gain access to the body the more opportunities there are to make that happen whether through ‘vaccines’ or masks pushed against the mouth and nose for hours on end.

So let us summarise the pros and cons of masks:

Against masks: Breathing in your own carbon dioxide; depriving the body and brain of sufficient oxygen; build-up of toxins in the mask that can be breathed into the lungs and cause rashes on the face and 'mask-mouth'; breathing microplastic fibres and toxic chemicals into the lungs; dehumanisation and deleting individualisation by literally making people faceless; destroying human emotional interaction through facial expression and deleting parental connection with their babies which look for guidance to their facial expression.

For masks: They don't protect you from a 'virus' that doesn't exist and even if it did 'viral' particles are so minute they are smaller than the holes in the mask.

Governments, police, supermarkets, businesses, transport companies, and all the rest who seek to impose masks have done no risk assessment on their consequences for health and psychology and are now open to group lawsuits when the impact becomes clear with a cumulative epidemic of respiratory and other disease. Authorities will try to exploit these effects and hide the real cause by dubbing them 'Covid-19'. Can you imagine setting out to force the population to wear health-destroying masks without doing any assessment of the risks? It is criminal and it is evil, but then how many people targeted in this way, who see their children told to wear them all day at school, have asked for a risk assessment? Billions can't be imposed upon by the few unless the billions allow it. Oh, yes, with just a tinge of irony, 85 percent of all masks made worldwide come from *China*.

Wash your hands in toxic shite

'Covid' rules include the use of toxic sanitisers and again the health consequences of constantly applying toxins to be absorbed through the skin is obvious to any level of Renegade Mind. America's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said that sanitisers are drugs and issued a warning about 75 dangerous brands which contain

methanol used in antifreeze and can cause death, kidney damage and blindness. The FDA circulated the following warning even for those brands that it claims to be safe:

Store hand sanitizer out of the reach of pets and children, and children should use it only with adult supervision. Do not drink hand sanitizer. This is particularly important for young children, especially toddlers, who may be attracted by the pleasant smell or brightly colored bottles of hand sanitizer.

Drinking even a small amount of hand sanitizer can cause alcohol poisoning in children. (However, there is no need to be concerned if your children eat with or lick their hands after using hand sanitizer.) During this coronavirus pandemic, poison control centers have had an increase in calls about accidental ingestion of hand sanitizer, so it is important that adults monitor young children's use.

Do not allow pets to swallow hand sanitizer. If you think your pet has eaten something potentially dangerous, call your veterinarian or a pet poison control center right away. Hand sanitizer is flammable and should be stored away from heat and flames. When using hand sanitizer, rub your hands until they feel completely dry before performing activities that may involve heat, sparks, static electricity, or open flames.

There you go, perfectly safe, then, and that's without even a mention of the toxins absorbed through the skin. Come on kids – sanitise your hands everywhere you go. It will save you from the 'virus'. Put all these elements together of the 'Covid' normal and see how much health and psychology is being cumulatively damaged, even devastated, to 'protect your health'. Makes sense, right? They are only imposing these things because they care, right? *Right?*

Submitting to insanity

Psychological reframing of the population goes very deep and is done in many less obvious ways. I hear people say how contradictory and crazy 'Covid' rules are and how they are ever changing. This is explained away by dismissing those involved as idiots. It is a big mistake. The Cult is delighted if its cold calculation is perceived as incompetence and idiocy when it is anything but. Oh, yes, there are idiots within the system – lots of them – but they are *administering* the Cult agenda, mostly unknowingly. They are not deciding and dictating it. The bulwark against tyranny is self-

respect, always has been, always will be. It is self-respect that has broken every tyranny in history. By its very nature self-respect will not bow to oppression and its perpetrators. There is so little self-respect that it's always the few that overturn dictators. Many may eventually follow, but the few with the iron spines (self-respect) kick it off and generate the momentum. The Cult targets self-respect in the knowledge that once this has gone only submission remains. Crazy, contradictory, ever-changing 'Covid' rules are systematically applied by psychologists to delete self-respect. They *want* you to see that the rules make no sense. It is one thing to decide to do something when *you* have made the choice based on evidence and logic. You still retain your self-respect. It is quite another when you can see what you are being told to do is insane, ridiculous and makes no sense, and *yet you still do it*. Your self-respect is extinguished and this has been happening as ever more obviously stupid and nonsensical things have been demanded and the great majority have complied even when they can see they are stupid and nonsensical.

People walk around in face-nappies knowing they are damaging their health and make no difference to a 'virus'. They do it in fear of not doing it. I know it's daft, but I'll do it anyway. When that happens something dies inside of you and submissive reframing has begun. Next there's a need to hide from yourself that you have conceded your self-respect and you convince yourself that you have not really submitted to fear and intimidation. You begin to believe that you are complying with craziness because it's the right thing to do. When first you concede your self-respect of $2+2 = 4$ to $2+2 = 5$ you *know* you are compromising your self-respect. Gradually to avoid facing that fact you begin to *believe* that $2+2=5$. You have been reframed and I have been watching this process happening in the human psyche on an industrial scale. The Cult is working to break your spirit and one of its major tools in that war is humiliation. I read how former American soldier Bradley Manning (later Chelsea Manning after a sex-change) was treated after being jailed for supplying WikiLeaks with documents exposing the enormity of

government and elite mendacity. Manning was isolated in solitary confinement for eight months, put under 24-hour surveillance, forced to hand over clothing before going to bed, and stand naked for every roll call. This is systematic humiliation. The introduction of anal swab 'Covid' tests in China has been done for the same reason to delete self-respect and induce compliant submission. Anal swabs are mandatory for incoming passengers in parts of China and American diplomats have said they were forced to undergo the indignity which would have been calculated humiliation by the Cult-owned Chinese government that has America in its sights.

Government-people: An abusive relationship

Spirit-breaking psychological techniques include giving people hope and apparent respite from tyranny only to take it away again. This happened in the UK during Christmas, 2020, when the psychopsychologists and their political lackeys announced an easing of restrictions over the holiday only to reimpose them almost immediately on the basis of yet another lie. There is a big psychological difference between getting used to oppression and being given hope of relief only to have that dashed. Psychologists know this and we have seen the technique used repeatedly. Then there is traumatising people before you introduce more extreme regulations that require compliance. A perfect case was the announcement by the dark and sinister Whitty and Vallance in the UK that 'new data' predicted that 4,000 could die every day over the winter of 2020/2021 if we did not lockdown again. I think they call it lying and after traumatising people with that claim out came Jackboot Johnson the next day with new curbs on human freedom. Psychologists know that a frightened and traumatised mind becomes suggestable to submission and behaviour reframing. Underpinning all this has been to make people fearful and suspicious of each other and see themselves as a potential danger to others. In league with deleted self-respect you have the perfect psychological recipe for self-loathing. The relationship between authority and public is now demonstrably the same as that of

subservience to an abusive partner. These are signs of an abusive relationship explained by psychologist Leslie Becker-Phelps:

Psychological and emotional abuse: Undermining a partner's self-worth with verbal attacks, name-calling, and belittling. Humiliating the partner in public, unjustly accusing them of having an affair, or interrogating them about their every behavior. Keeping partner confused or off balance by saying they were just kidding or blaming the partner for 'making' them act this way ... Feigning in public that they care while turning against them in private. This leads to victims frequently feeling confused, incompetent, unworthy, hopeless, and chronically self-doubting. [Apply these techniques to how governments have treated the population since New Year, 2020, and the parallels are obvious.]

Physical abuse: The abuser might physically harm their partner in a range of ways, such as grabbing, hitting, punching, or shoving them. They might throw objects at them or harm them with a weapon. [Observe the physical harm imposed by masks, lockdown, and so on.]

Threats and intimidation: One way abusers keep their partners in line is by instilling fear. They might be verbally threatening, or give threatening looks or gestures. Abusers often make it known that they are tracking their partner's every move. They might destroy their partner's possessions, threaten to harm them, or threaten to harm their family members. Not surprisingly, victims of this abuse often feel anxiety, fear, and panic. [No words necessary.]

Isolation: Abusers often limit their partner's activities, forbidding them to talk or interact with friends or family. They might limit access to a car or even turn off their phone. All of this might be done by physically holding them against their will, but is often accomplished through psychological abuse and intimidation. The more isolated a person feels, the fewer resources they have to help gain perspective on their situation and to escape from it. [No words necessary.]

Economic abuse: Abusers often make their partners beholden to them for money by controlling access to funds of any kind. They might prevent their partner from getting a job or withhold access to money they earn from a job. This creates financial dependency that makes leaving the relationship very difficult. [See destruction of livelihoods and the proposed meagre 'guaranteed income' so long as you do whatever you are told.]

Using children: An abuser might disparage their partner's parenting skills, tell their children lies about their partner, threaten to take custody of their children, or threaten to harm their children. These tactics instil fear and often elicit compliance. [See reframed social service mafia and how children are being mercilessly abused by the state over 'Covid' while their parents look on too frightened to do anything.]

A further recurring trait in an abusive relationship is the abused blaming themselves for their abuse and making excuses for the abuser. We have the public blaming each other for lockdown abuse by government and many making excuses for the government while attacking those who challenge the government. How often we have heard authorities say that rules are being imposed or reimposed only because people have refused to 'behave' and follow the rules. We don't want to do it – it's *you*.

Renegade Minds are an antidote to all of these things. They will never concede their self-respect no matter what the circumstances. Even when apparent humiliation is heaped upon them they laugh in its face and reflect back the humiliation on the abuser where it belongs. Renegade Minds will never wear masks they know are only imposed to humiliate, suppress and damage both physically and psychologically. Consequences will take care of themselves and they will never break their spirit or cause them to concede to tyranny. UK newspaper columnist Peter Hitchens was one of the few in the mainstream media to speak out against lockdowns and forced vaccinations. He then announced he had taken the jab. He wanted to see family members abroad and he believed vaccine passports were inevitable even though they had not yet been introduced. Hitchens

has a questioning and critical mind, but not a Renegade one. If he had no amount of pressure would have made him concede. Hitchens excused his action by saying that the battle has been lost. Renegade Minds never accept defeat when freedom is at stake and even if they are the last one standing the self-respect of not submitting to tyranny is more important than any outcome or any consequence.

That's why Renegade Minds are the only minds that ever changed anything worth changing.

CHAPTER EIGHT

'Reframing' insanity

Insanity is relative. It depends on who has who locked in what cage
Ray Bradbury

Reframing' a mind means simply to change its perception and behaviour. This can be done subconsciously to such an extent that subjects have no idea they have been 'reframed' while to any observer changes in behaviour and attitudes are obvious.

Human society is being reframed on a ginormous scale since the start of 2020 and here we have the reason why psychologists rather than doctors have been calling the shots. Ask most people who have succumbed to 'Covid' reframing if they have changed and most will say 'no'; but they *have* and fundamentally. The Cult's long-game has been preparing for these times since way back and crucial to that has been to prepare both population and officialdom mentally and emotionally. To use the mind-control parlance they had to reframe the population with a mentality that would submit to fascism and reframe those in government and law enforcement to impose fascism or at least go along with it. The result has been the fact-deleted mindlessness of 'Wokeness' and officialdom that has either enthusiastically or unquestioningly imposed global tyranny demanded by reframed politicians on behalf of psychopathic and deeply evil cultists. 'Cognitive reframing' identifies and challenges the way someone sees the world in the form of situations, experiences and emotions and then restructures those perceptions to view the same set of circumstances in a different way. This can have

benefits if the attitudes are personally destructive while on the other side it has the potential for individual and collective mind control which the subject has no idea has even happened.

Cognitive therapy was developed in the 1960s by Aaron T. Beck who was born in Rhode Island in 1921 as the son of Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine. He became interested in the techniques as a treatment for depression. Beck's daughter Judith S. Beck is prominent in the same field and they founded the Beck Institute for Cognitive Behavior Therapy in Philadelphia in 1994. Cognitive reframing, however, began to be used worldwide by those with a very dark agenda. The Cult reframes politicians to change their attitudes and actions until they are completely at odds with what they once appeared to stand for. The same has been happening to government administrators at all levels, law enforcement, military and the human population. Cultists love mind control for two main reasons: It allows them to control what people think, do and say to secure agenda advancement and, by definition, it calms their legendary insecurity and fear of the unexpected. I have studied mind control since the time I travelled America in 1996. I may have been talking to next to no one in terms of an audience in those years, but my goodness did I gather a phenomenal amount of information and knowledge about so many things including the techniques of mind control. I have described this in detail in other books going back to *The Biggest Secret* in 1998. I met a very large number of people recovering from MKUltra and its offshoots and successors and I began to see how these same techniques were being used on the population in general. This was never more obvious than since the 'Covid' hoax began.

Reframing the enforcers

I have observed over the last two decades and more the very clear transformation in the dynamic between the police, officialdom and the public. I tracked this in the books as the relationship mutated from one of serving the public to seeing them as almost the enemy and certainly a lower caste. There has always been a class divide

based on income and always been some psychopathic, corrupt, and big-I-am police officers. This was different. Wholesale change was unfolding in the collective dynamic; it was less about money and far more about position and perceived power. An us-and-them was emerging. Noses were lifted skyward by government administration and law enforcement and their attitude to the public they were *supposed* to be serving changed to one of increasing contempt, superiority and control. The transformation was so clear and widespread that it had to be planned. Collective attitudes and dynamics do not change naturally and organically that quickly on that scale. I then came across an organisation in Britain called Common Purpose created in the late 1980s by Julia Middleton who would work in the office of Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott during the long and disastrous premiership of war criminal Tony Blair. When Blair speaks the Cult is speaking and the man should have been in jail a long time ago. Common Purpose proclaims itself to be one of the biggest 'leadership development' organisations in the world while functioning as a *charity* with all the financial benefits which come from that. It hosts 'leadership development' courses and programmes all over the world and claims to have 'brought together' what it calls 'leaders' from more than 100 countries on six continents. The modus operandi of Common Purpose can be compared with the work of the UK government's reframing network that includes the Behavioural Insights Team 'nudge unit' and 'Covid' reframing specialists at SPI-B. WikiLeaks described Common Purpose long ago as 'a hidden virus in our government and schools' which is unknown to the general public: 'It recruits and trains "leaders" to be loyal to the directives of Common Purpose and the EU, instead of to their own departments, which they then undermine or subvert, the NHS [National Health Service] being an example.' This is a vital point to understand the 'Covid' hoax. The NHS, and its equivalent around the world, has been utterly reframed in terms of administrators and much of the medical personnel with the transformation underpinned by recruitment policies. The outcome has been the criminal and psychopathic behaviour of the

NHS over 'Covid' and we have seen the same in every other major country. WikiLeaks said Common Purpose trainees are 'learning to rule without regard to democracy' and to usher in a police state (current events explained). Common Purpose operated like a 'glue' and had members in the NHS, BBC, police, legal profession, church, many of Britain's 7,000 quangos, local councils, the Civil Service, government ministries and Parliament, and controlled many RDA's (Regional Development Agencies). Here we have one answer for how and why British institutions and their like in other countries have changed so negatively in relation to the public. This further explains how and why the beyond-disgraceful reframed BBC has become a propaganda arm of 'Covid' fascism. They are all part of a network pursuing the same goal.

By 2019 Common Purpose was quoting a figure of 85,000 'leaders' that had attended its programmes. These 'students' of all ages are known as Common Purpose 'graduates' and they consist of government, state and local government officials and administrators, police chiefs and officers, and a whole range of others operating within the national, local and global establishment. Cressida Dick, Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police, is the Common Purpose graduate who was the 'Gold Commander' that oversaw what can only be described as the murder of Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005. He was held down by psychopathic police and shot seven times in the head by a psychopathic lunatic after being mistaken for a terrorist when he was just a bloke going about his day. Dick authorised officers to pursue and keep surveillance on de Menezes and ordered that he be stopped from entering the underground train system. Police psychopaths took her at her word clearly. She was 'disciplined' for this outrage by being *promoted* – eventually to the top of the 'Met' police where she has been a disaster. Many Chief Constables controlling the police in different parts of the UK are and have been Common Purpose graduates. I have heard the 'graduate' network described as a sort of Mafia or secret society operating within the fabric of government at all levels pursuing a collective policy

ingrained at Common Purpose training events. Founder Julia Middleton herself has said:

Locally and internationally, Common Purpose graduates will be 'lighting small fires' to create change in their organisations and communities ... The Common Purpose effect is best illustrated by the many stories of small changes brought about by leaders, who themselves have changed.

A Common Purpose mission statement declared:

Common Purpose aims to improve the way society works by expanding the vision, decision-making ability and influence of all kinds of leaders. The organisation runs a variety of educational programmes for leaders of all ages, backgrounds and sectors, in order to provide them with the inspirational, information and opportunities they need to change the world.

Yes, but into what? Since 2020 the answer has become clear.

NLP and the Delphi technique

Common Purpose would seem to be a perfect name or would common programming be better? One of the foundation methods of reaching 'consensus' (group think) is by setting the agenda theme and then encouraging, cajoling or pressuring everyone to agree a 'consensus' in line with the core theme promoted by Common Purpose. The methodology involves the 'Delphi technique', or an adaption of it, in which opinions are expressed that are summarised by a 'facilitator or change agent' at each stage. Participants are 'encouraged' to modify their views in the light of what others have said. Stage by stage the former individual opinions are merged into group consensus which just happens to be what Common Purpose wants them to believe. A key part of this is to marginalise anyone refusing to concede to group think and turn the group against them to apply pressure to conform. We are seeing this very technique used on the general population to make 'Covid' group-thinkers hostile to those who have seen through the bullshit. People can be reframed by using perception manipulation methods such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in which you change perception with the use of

carefully constructed language. An NLP website described the technique this way:

... A method of influencing brain behaviour (the 'neuro' part of the phrase) through the use of language (the 'linguistic' part) and other types of communication to enable a person to 'recode' the way the brain responds to stimuli (that's the 'programming') and manifest new and better behaviours. Neuro-Linguistic Programming often incorporates hypnosis and self-hypnosis to help achieve the change (or 'programming') that is wanted.

British alternative media operation UKColumn has done very detailed research into Common Purpose over a long period. I quoted co-founder and former naval officer Brian Gerrish in my book *Remember Who You Are*, published in 2011, as saying the following years before current times:

It is interesting that many of the mothers who have had children taken by the State speak of the Social Services people being icily cool, emotionless and, as two ladies said in slightly different words, '... like little robots'. We know that NLP is cumulative, so people can be given small imperceptible doses of NLP in a course here, another in a few months, next year etc. In this way, major changes are accrued in their personality, but the day by day change is almost unnoticeable.

In these and other ways 'graduates' have had their perceptions uniformly reframed and they return to their roles in the institutions of government, law enforcement, legal profession, military, 'education', the UK National Health Service and the whole swathe of the establishment structure to pursue a common agenda preparing for the 'post-industrial', 'post-democratic' society. I say 'preparing' but we are now there. 'Post-industrial' is code for the Great Reset and 'post-democratic' is 'Covid' fascism. UKColumn has spoken to partners of those who have attended Common Purpose 'training'. They have described how personalities and attitudes of 'graduates' changed very noticeably for the worse by the time they had completed the course. They had been 'reframed' and told they are the 'leaders' – the special ones – who know better than the population. There has also been the very demonstrable recruitment of psychopaths and narcissists into government administration at all

levels and law enforcement. If you want psychopathy hire psychopaths and you get a simple cause and effect. If you want administrators, police officers and 'leaders' to perceive the public as lesser beings who don't matter then employ narcissists. These personalities are identified using 'psychometrics' that identifies knowledge, abilities, attitudes and personality traits, mostly through carefully-designed questionnaires and tests. As this policy has passed through the decades we have had power-crazy, power-trippers appointed into law enforcement, security and government administration in preparation for current times and the dynamic between public and law enforcement/officialdom has been transformed. UKColumn's Brian Gerrish said of the narcissistic personality:

Their love of themselves and power automatically means that they will crush others who get in their way. I received a major piece of the puzzle when a friend pointed out that when they made public officials re-apply for their own jobs several years ago they were also required to do psychometric tests. This was undoubtedly the start of the screening process to get 'their' sort of people in post.

How obvious that has been since 2020 although it was clear what was happening long before if people paid attention to the changing public-establishment dynamic.

Change agents

At the centre of events in 'Covid' Britain is the National Health Service (NHS) which has behaved disgracefully in slavishly following the Cult agenda. The NHS management structure is awash with Common Purpose graduates or 'change agents' working to a common cause. Helen Bevan, a Chief of Service Transformation at the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, co-authored a document called 'Towards a million change agents, a review of the social movements literature: implications for large scale change in the NHS'. The document compared a project management approach to that of change and social movements where 'people change

themselves and each other – peer to peer’. Two definitions given for a ‘social movement’ were:

A group of people who consciously attempt to build a radically new social order; involves people of a broad range of social backgrounds; and deploys politically confrontational and socially disruptive tactics – Cyrus Zirakzadeh 1997

Collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities – Sidney Tarrow 1994

Helen Bevan wrote another NHS document in which she defined ‘framing’ as ‘the process by which leaders construct, articulate and put across their message in a powerful and compelling way in order to win people to their cause and call them to action’. I think I could come up with another definition that would be rather more accurate. The National Health Service and institutions of Britain and the wider world have been taken over by reframed ‘change agents’ and that includes everything from the United Nations to national governments, local councils and social services which have been kidnapping children from loving parents on an extraordinary and gathering scale on the road to the end of parenthood altogether. Children from loving homes are stolen and kidnapped by the state and put into the ‘care’ (inversion) of the local authority through council homes, foster parents and forced adoption. At the same time children are allowed to be abused without response while many are under council ‘care’. UKColumn highlighted the Common Purpose connection between South Yorkshire Police and Rotherham council officers in the case of the scandal in that area of the sexual exploitation of children to which the authorities turned not one blind eye, but both:

We were alarmed to discover that the Chief Executive, the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, the Manager for the Local Strategic Partnership, the Community Cohesion Manager, the Cabinet Member for Cohesion, the Chief Constable and his predecessor had all attended Leadership training courses provided by the pseudo-charity Common Purpose.

Once 'change agents' have secured positions of hire and fire within any organisation things start to move very quickly. Personnel are then hired and fired on the basis of whether they will work towards the agenda the change agent represents. If they do they are rapidly promoted even though they may be incompetent. Those more qualified and skilled who are pre-Common Purpose 'old school' see their careers stall and even disappear. This has been happening for decades in every institution of state, police, 'health' and social services and all of them have been transformed as a result in their attitudes to their jobs and the public. Medical professions, including nursing, which were once vocations for the caring now employ many cold, callous and couldn't give a shit personality types. The UKColumn investigation concluded:

By blurring the boundaries between people, professions, public and private sectors, responsibility and accountability, Common Purpose encourages 'graduates' to believe that as new selected leaders, they can work together, outside of the established political and social structures, to achieve a paradigm shift or CHANGE – so called 'Leading Beyond Authority'. In doing so, the allegiance of the individual becomes 'reframed' on CP colleagues and their NETWORK.

Reframing the Face-Nappies

Nowhere has this process been more obvious than in the police where recruitment of psychopaths and development of unquestioning mind-controlled group-thinkers have transformed law enforcement into a politically-correct 'Woke' joke and a travesty of what should be public service. Today they wear their face-nappies like good little gofers and enforce 'Covid' rules which are fascism under another name. Alongside the specifically-recruited psychopaths we have software minds incapable of free thought. Brian Gerrish again:

An example is the policeman who would not get on a bike for a press photo because he had not done the cycling proficiency course. Normal people say this is political correctness gone mad. Nothing could be further from the truth. The policeman has been reframed, and in his reality it is perfect common sense not to get on the bike 'because he hasn't done the cycling course'.

Another example of this is where the police would not rescue a boy from a pond until they had taken advice from above on the 'risk assessment'. A normal person would have arrived, perhaps thought of the risk for a moment, and dived in. To the police now 'reframed', they followed 'normal' procedure.

There are shocking cases of reframed ambulance crews doing the same. Sheer unthinking stupidity of London Face-Nappies headed by Common Purpose graduate Cressida Dick can be seen in their behaviour at a vigil in March, 2021, for a murdered woman, Sarah Everard. A police officer had been charged with the crime. Anyone with a brain would have left the vigil alone in the circumstances. Instead they 'manhandled' women to stop them breaking 'Covid rules' to betray classic reframing. Minds in the thrall of perception control have no capacity for seeing a situation on its merits and acting accordingly. 'Rules is rules' is their only mind-set. My father used to say that rules and regulations are for the guidance of the intelligent and the blind obedience of the idiot. Most of the intelligent, decent, coppers have gone leaving only the other kind and a few old school for whom the job must be a daily nightmare. The combination of psychopaths and rule-book software minds has been clearly on public display in the 'Covid' era with automaton robots in uniform imposing fascistic 'Covid' regulations on the population without any personal initiative or judging situations on their merits. There are thousands of examples around the world, but I'll make my point with the infamous Derbyshire police in the English East Midlands – the ones who think pouring dye into beauty spots and using drones to track people walking in the countryside away from anyone is called 'policing'. To them there are rules decreed by the government which they have to enforce and in their bewildered state a group gathering in a closed space and someone walking alone in the countryside are the same thing. It is beyond idiocy and enters the realm of clinical insanity.

Police officers in Derbyshire said they were 'horrified' – *horrified* – to find 15 to 20 'irresponsible' kids playing a football match at a closed leisure centre 'in breach of coronavirus restrictions'. When they saw the police the kids ran away leaving their belongings behind and the reframed men and women of Derbyshire police were seeking to establish their identities with a view to fining their parents. The most natural thing for youngsters to do – kicking a ball about – is turned into a criminal activity and enforced by the moronic software programs of Derbyshire police. You find the same mentality in every country. These barely conscious 'horrified' officers said they had to take action because 'we need to ensure these rules are being followed' and 'it is of the utmost importance that you ensure your children are following the rules and regulations for Covid-19'. Had any of them done ten seconds of research to see if this parroting of their masters' script could be supported by any evidence? Nope. Reframed people don't think – others think for them and that's the whole idea of reframing. I have seen police officers one after the other repeating without question word for word what officialdom tells them just as I have seen great swathes of the public doing the same. Ask either for 'their' opinion and out spews what they have been told to think by the official narrative. Police and public may seem to be in different groups, but their mentality is the same. Most people do whatever they are told in fear not doing so or because they believe what officialdom tells them; almost the entirety of the police do what they are told for the same reason. Ultimately it's the tiny inner core of the global Cult that's telling both what to do.

So Derbyshire police were 'horrified'. Oh, really? Why did they think those kids were playing football? It was to relieve the psychological consequences of lockdown and being denied human contact with their friends and interaction, touch and discourse vital to human psychological health. Being denied this month after month has dismantled the psyche of many children and young people as depression and suicide have exploded. Were Derbyshire police *horrified by that*? Are you kidding? Reframed people don't have those

mental and emotional processes that can see how the impact on the psychological health of youngsters is far more dangerous than any 'virus' even if you take the mendacious official figures to be true. The reframed are told (programmed) how to act and so they do. The Derbyshire Chief Constable in the first period of lockdown when the black dye and drones nonsense was going on was Peter Goodman. He was the man who severed the connection between his force and the Derbyshire Constabulary *Male Voice* Choir when he decided that it was not inclusive enough to allow women to join. The fact it was a male voice choir making a particular sound produced by male voices seemed to elude a guy who terrifyingly ran policing in Derbyshire. He retired weeks after his force was condemned as disgraceful by former Supreme Court Justice Jonathan Sumption for their behaviour over extreme lockdown impositions. Goodman was replaced by his deputy Rachel Swann who was in charge when her officers were 'horrificed'. The police statement over the boys committing the hanging-offence of playing football included the line about the youngsters being 'irresponsible in the times we are all living through' missing the point that the real relevance of the 'times we are all living through' is the imposition of fascism enforced by psychopaths and reframed minds of police officers playing such a vital part in establishing the fascist tyranny that their own children and grandchildren will have to live in their entire lives. As a definition of insanity that is hard to beat although it might be run close by imposing masks on people that can have a serious effect on their health while wearing a face nappy all day themselves. Once again public and police do it for the same reason – the authorities tell them to and who are they to have the self-respect to say no?

Wokers in uniform

How reframed do you have to be to arrest a *six-year-old* and take him to court for *picking a flower* while waiting for a bus? Brain dead police and officialdom did just that in North Carolina where criminal proceedings happen regularly for children under nine. Attorney Julie Boyer gave the six-year-old crayons and a colouring book

during the 'flower' hearing while the 'adults' decided his fate. County Chief District Court Judge Jay Corpening asked: 'Should a child that believes in Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy be making life-altering decisions?' Well, of course not, but common sense has no meaning when you have a common purpose and a reframed mind. Treating children in this way, and police operating in American schools, is all part of the psychological preparation for children to accept a police state as normal all their adult lives. The same goes for all the cameras and biometric tracking technology in schools. Police training is focused on reframing them as snowflake Wokers and this is happening in the military. Pentagon top brass said that 'training sessions on extremism' were needed for troops who asked why they were so focused on the Capitol Building riot when Black Lives Matter riots were ignored. What's the difference between them some apparently and rightly asked. Actually, there is a difference. Five people died in the Capitol riot, only one through violence, and that was a police officer shooting an unarmed protestor. BLM riots killed at least 25 people and cost billions. Asking the question prompted the psychopaths and reframed minds that run the Pentagon to say that more 'education' (programming) was needed. Troop training is all based on psychological programming to make them fodder for the Cult – 'Military men are just dumb, stupid animals to be used as pawns in foreign policy' as Cult-to-his-DNA former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger famously said. Governments see the police in similar terms and it's time for those among them who can see this to defend the people and stop being enforcers of the Cult agenda upon the people.

The US military, like the country itself, is being targeted for destruction through a long list of Woke impositions. Cult-owned gaga 'President' Biden signed an executive order when he took office to allow taxpayer money to pay for transgender surgery for active military personnel and veterans. Are you a man soldier? No, I'm a LGBTQIA+ with a hint of Skoliosexual and Spectrasexual. Oh, good man. Bad choice of words you bigot. The Pentagon announced in March, 2021, the appointment of the first 'diversity and inclusion

officer' for US Special Forces. Richard Torres-Estrada arrived with the publication of a 'D&I Strategic Plan which will guide the enterprise-wide effort to institutionalize and sustain D&I'. If you think a Special Forces 'Strategic Plan' should have something to do with defending America you haven't been paying attention. Defending Woke is now the military's new role. Torres-Estrada has posted images comparing Donald Trump with Adolf Hitler and we can expect no bias from him as a representative of the supposedly non-political Pentagon. Cable news host Tucker Carlson said: 'The Pentagon is now the Yale faculty lounge but with cruise missiles.' Meanwhile Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, a board member of weapons-maker Raytheon with stock and compensation interests in October, 2020, worth \$1.4 million, said he was purging the military of the 'enemy within' – anyone who isn't Woke and supports Donald Trump. Austin refers to his targets as 'racist extremists' while in true Woke fashion being himself a racist extremist. Pentagon documents pledge to 'eradicate, eliminate and conquer all forms of racism, sexism and homophobia'. The definitions of these are decided by 'diversity and inclusion committees' peopled by those who see racism, sexism and homophobia in every situation and opinion. Woke (the Cult) is dismantling the US military and purging testosterone as China expands its military and gives its troops 'masculinity training'. How do we think that is going to end when this is all Cult coordinated? The US military, like the British military, is controlled by Woke and spineless top brass who just go along with it out of personal career interests.

'Woke' means fast asleep

Mind control and perception manipulation techniques used on individuals to create group-think have been unleashed on the global population in general. As a result many have no capacity to see the obvious fascist agenda being installed all around them or what 'Covid' is really all about. Their brains are firewalled like a computer system not to process certain concepts, thoughts and realisations that are bad for the Cult. The young are most targeted as the adults they

will be when the whole fascist global state is planned to be fully implemented. They need to be prepared for total compliance to eliminate all pushback from entire generations. The Cult has been pouring billions into taking complete control of 'education' from schools to universities via its operatives and corporations and not least Bill Gates as always. The plan has been to transform 'education' institutions into programming centres for the mentality of 'Woke'. James McConnell, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, wrote in *Psychology Today* in 1970:

The day has come when we can combine sensory deprivation with drugs, hypnosis, and astute manipulation of reward and punishment, to gain almost absolute control over an individual's behaviour. It should then be possible to achieve a very rapid and highly effective type of brainwashing that would allow us to make dramatic changes in a person's behaviour and personality ...

... We should reshape society so that we all would be trained from birth to want to do what society wants us to do. We have the techniques to do it... no-one owns his own personality you acquired, and there's no reason to believe you should have the right to refuse to acquire a new personality if your old one is anti-social.

This was the potential for mass brainwashing in 1970 and the mentality there displayed captures the arrogant psychopathy that drives it forward. I emphasise that not all young people have succumbed to Woke programming and those that haven't are incredibly impressive people given that today's young are the most perceptually-targeted generations in history with all the technology now involved. Vast swathes of the young generations, however, have fallen into the spell – and that's what it is – of Woke. The Woke mentality and perceptual program is founded on *inversion* and you will appreciate later why that is so significant. Everything with Woke is inverted and the opposite of what it is claimed to be. Woke was a term used in African-American culture from the 1900s and referred to an awareness of social and racial justice. This is not the meaning of the modern version or 'New Woke' as I call it in *The Answer*. Oh, no, Woke today means something very different no matter how much Wokers may seek to hide that and insist Old Woke and New

Woke are the same. See if you find any 'awareness of social justice' here in the modern variety:

- Woke demands 'inclusivity' while excluding anyone with a different opinion and calls for mass censorship to silence other views.
- Woke claims to stand against oppression when imposing oppression is the foundation of all that it does. It is the driver of political correctness which is nothing more than a Cult invention to manipulate the population to silence itself.
- Woke believes itself to be 'liberal' while pursuing a global society that can only be described as fascist (see 'anti-fascist' fascist Antifa).
- Woke calls for 'social justice' while spreading injustice wherever it goes against the common 'enemy' which can be easily identified as a differing view.
- Woke is supposed to be a metaphor for 'awake' when it is solid-gold asleep and deep in a Cult-induced coma that meets the criteria for 'off with the fairies'.

I state these points as obvious facts if people only care to look. I don't do this with a sense of condemnation. We need to appreciate that the onslaught of perceptual programming on the young has been incessant and merciless. I can understand why so many have been reframed, or, given their youth, framed from the start to see the world as the Cult demands. The Cult has had access to their minds day after day in its 'education' system for their entire formative years. Perception is formed from information received and the Cult-created system is a life-long download of information delivered to elicit a particular perception, thus behaviour. The more this has expanded into still new extremes in recent decades and ever-increasing censorship has deleted other opinions and information why wouldn't that lead to a perceptual reframing on a mass scale? I

have described already cradle-to-grave programming and in more recent times the targeting of young minds from birth to adulthood has entered the stratosphere. This has taken the form of skewing what is 'taught' to fit the Cult agenda and the omnipresent techniques of group-think to isolate non-believers and pressure them into line. There has always been a tendency to follow the herd, but we really are in a new world now in relation to that. We have parents who can see the 'Covid' hoax told by their children not to stop them wearing masks at school, being 'Covid' tested or having the 'vaccine' in fear of the peer-pressure consequences of being different. What is 'peer-pressure' if not pressure to conform to group-think? Renegade Minds never group-think and always retain a set of perceptions that are unique to them. Group-think is always underpinned by consequences for not group-thinking. Abuse now aimed at those refusing DNA-manipulating 'Covid vaccines' are a potent example of this. The biggest pressure to conform comes from the very group which is itself being manipulated. 'I am programmed to be part of a hive mind and so you must be.'

Woke control structures in 'education' now apply to every mainstream organisation. Those at the top of the 'education' hierarchy (the Cult) decide the policy. This is imposed on governments through the Cult network; governments impose it on schools, colleges and universities; their leadership impose the policy on teachers and academics and they impose it on children and students. At any level where there is resistance, perhaps from a teacher or university lecturer, they are targeted by the authorities and often fired. Students themselves regularly demand the dismissal of academics (increasingly few) at odds with the narrative that the students have been programmed to believe in. It is quite a thought that students who are being targeted by the Cult become so consumed by programmed group-think that they launch protests and demand the removal of those who are trying to push back against those targeting the students. Such is the scale of perceptual inversion. We see this with 'Covid' programming as the Cult imposes the rules via psycho-psychologists and governments on

shops, transport companies and businesses which impose them on their staff who impose them on their customers who pressure Pushbackers to conform to the will of the Cult which is in the process of destroying them and their families. Scan all aspects of society and you will see the same sequence every time.

Fact free Woke and hijacking the 'left'

There is no more potent example of this than 'Woke', a mentality only made possible by the deletion of factual evidence by an 'education' system seeking to produce an ever more uniform society. Why would you bother with facts when you don't know any? Deletion of credible history both in volume and type is highly relevant. Orwell said: 'Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.' They who control the perception of the past control the perception of the future and they who control the present control the perception of the past through the writing and deleting of history. Why would you oppose the imposition of Marxism in the name of Wokeism when you don't know that Marxism cost at least 100 million lives in the 20th century alone? Watch videos and read reports in which Woker generations are asked basic historical questions – it's mind-blowing. A survey of 2,000 people found that six percent of millennials (born approximately early 1980s to early 2000s) believed the Second World War (1939-1945) broke out with the assassination of President Kennedy (in 1963) and one in ten thought Margaret Thatcher was British Prime Minister at the time. She was in office between 1979 and 1990. We are in a post-fact society. Provable facts are no defence against the fascism of political correctness or Silicon Valley censorship. Facts don't matter anymore as we have witnessed with the 'Covid' hoax. Sacrificing uniqueness to the Woke group-think religion is all you are required to do and that means thinking for yourself is the biggest Woke no, no. All religions are an expression of group-think and censorship and Woke is just another religion with an orthodoxy defended by group-think and censorship. Burned at

the stake becomes burned on Twitter which leads back eventually to burned at the stake as Woke humanity regresses to ages past.

The biggest Woke inversion of all is its creators and funders. I grew up in a traditional left of centre political household on a council estate in Leicester in the 1950s and 60s – you know, the left that challenged the power of wealth-hoarding elites and threats to freedom of speech and opinion. In those days students went on marches defending freedom of speech while today's Wokers march for its deletion. What on earth could have happened? Those very elites (collectively the Cult) that we opposed in my youth and early life have funded into existence the antithesis of that former left and hijacked the 'brand' while inverting everything it ever stood for. We have a mentality that calls itself 'liberal' and 'progressive' while acting like fascists. Cult billionaires and their corporations have funded themselves into control of 'education' to ensure that Woke programming is unceasing throughout the formative years of children and young people and that non-Wokers are isolated (that word again) whether they be students, teachers or college professors. The Cult has funded into existence the now colossal global network of Woke organisations that have spawned and promoted all the 'causes' on the Cult wish-list for global transformation and turned Wokers into demanders of them. Does anyone really think it's a coincidence that the Cult agenda for humanity is a carbon (sorry) copy of the societal transformations desired by Woke?? These are only some of them:

Political correctness: The means by which the Cult deletes all public debates that it knows it cannot win if we had the free-flow of information and evidence.

Human-caused 'climate change': The means by which the Cult seeks to transform society into a globally-controlled dictatorship imposing its will over the fine detail of everyone's lives 'to save the planet' which doesn't actually need saving.

Transgender obsession: Preparing collective perception to accept the 'new human' which would not have genders because it would be created technologically and not through procreation. I'll have much more on this in Human 2.0.

Race obsession: The means by which the Cult seeks to divide and rule the population by triggering racial division through the perception that society is more racist than ever when the opposite is the case. Is it perfect in that regard? No. But to compare today with the racism of apartheid and segregation brought to an end by the civil rights movement in the 1960s is to insult the memory of that movement and inspirations like Martin Luther King. Why is the 'anti-racism' industry (which it is) so dominated by privileged white people?

White supremacy: This is a label used by privileged white people to demonise poor and deprived white people pushing back on tyranny to marginalise and destroy them. White people are being especially targeted as the dominant race by number within Western society which the Cult seeks to transform in its image. If you want to change a society you must weaken and undermine its biggest group and once you have done that by using the other groups you next turn on them to do the same ... 'Then they came for the Jews and I was not a Jew so I did nothing.'

Mass migration: The mass movement of people from the Middle East, Africa and Asia into Europe, from the south into the United States and from Asia into Australia are another way the Cult seeks to dilute the racial, cultural and political influence of white people on Western society. White people ask why their governments appear to be working against them while being politically and culturally biased towards incoming cultures. Well, here's your answer. In the same way sexually 'straight' people, men and women, ask why the

authorities are biased against them in favour of other sexualities. The answer is the same – that's the way the Cult wants it to be for very sinister motives.

These are all central parts of the Cult agenda and central parts of the Woke agenda and Woke was created and continues to be funded to an immense degree by Cult billionaires and corporations. If anyone begins to say 'coincidence' the syllables should stick in their throat.

Billionaire 'social justice warriors'

Joe Biden is a 100 percent-owned asset of the Cult and the Wokers' man in the White House whenever he can remember his name and for however long he lasts with his rapidly diminishing cognitive function. Even walking up the steps of an aircraft without falling on his arse would appear to be a challenge. He's not an empty-shell puppet or anything. From the minute Biden took office (or the Cult did) he began his executive orders promoting the Woke wish-list. You will see the Woke agenda imposed ever more severely because it's really the *Cult* agenda. Woke organisations and activist networks spawned by the Cult are funded to the extreme so long as they promote what the Cult wants to happen. Woke is funded to promote 'social justice' by billionaires who become billionaires by destroying social justice. The social justice mantra is only a cover for dismantling social justice and funded by billionaires that couldn't give a damn about social justice. Everything makes sense when you see that. One of Woke's premier funders is Cult billionaire financier George Soros who said: 'I am basically there to make money, I cannot and do not look at the social consequences of what I do.' This is the same Soros who has given more than \$32 billion to his Open Society Foundations global Woke network and funded Black Lives Matter, mass immigration into Europe and the United States, transgender activism, climate change activism, political correctness and groups targeting 'white supremacy' in the form of privileged white thugs that dominate Antifa. What a scam it all is and when

you are dealing with the unquestioning fact-free zone of Woke scamming them is child's play. All you need to pull it off in all these organisations are a few in-the-know agents of the Cult and an army of naïve, reframed, uninformed, narcissistic, know-nothings convinced of their own self-righteousness, self-purity and virtue.

Soros and fellow billionaires and billionaire corporations have poured hundreds of millions into Black Lives Matter and connected groups and promoted them to a global audience. None of this is motivated by caring about black people. These are the billionaires that have controlled and exploited a system that leaves millions of black people in abject poverty and deprivation which they do absolutely nothing to address. The same Cult networks funding BLM were behind the *slave trade*! Black Lives Matter hijacked a phrase that few would challenge and they have turned this laudable concept into a political weapon to divide society. You know that BLM is a fraud when it claims that *All Lives Matter*, the most inclusive statement of all, is 'racist'. BLM and its Cult masters don't want to end racism. To them it's a means to an end to control all of humanity never mind the colour, creed, culture or background. What has destroying the nuclear family got to do with ending racism? Nothing – but that is one of the goals of BLM and also happens to be a goal of the Cult as I have been exposing in my books for decades. Stealing children from loving parents and giving schools ever more power to override parents is part of that same agenda. BLM is a Marxist organisation and why would that not be the case when the Cult created Marxism *and* BLM? Patrisse Cullors, a BLM co-founder, said in a 2015 video that she and her fellow organisers, including co-founder Alicia Garza, are 'trained Marxists'. The lady known after marriage as Patrisse Khan-Cullors bought a \$1.4 million home in 2021 in one of the whitest areas of California with a black population of just 1.6 per cent and has so far bought *four* high-end homes for a total of \$3.2 million. How very Marxist. There must be a bit of spare in the BLM coffers, however, when Cult corporations and billionaires have handed over the best part of \$100 million. Many black people can see that Black Lives Matter is not

working for them, but against them, and this is still more confirmation. Black journalist Jason Whitlock, who had his account suspended by Twitter for simply linking to the story about the 'Marxist's' home buying spree, said that BLM leaders are 'making millions of dollars off the backs of these dead black men who they wouldn't spit on if they were on fire and alive'.

Black Lies Matter

Cult assets and agencies came together to promote BLM in the wake of the death of career criminal George Floyd who had been jailed a number of times including for forcing his way into the home of a black woman with others in a raid in which a gun was pointed at her stomach. Floyd was filmed being held in a Minneapolis street in 2020 with the knee of a police officer on his neck and he subsequently died. It was an appalling thing for the officer to do, but the same technique has been used by police on peaceful protestors of lockdown without any outcry from the Woke brigade. As unquestioning supporters of the Cult agenda Wokers have supported lockdown and all the 'Covid' claptrap while attacking anyone standing up to the tyranny imposed in its name. Court documents would later include details of an autopsy on Floyd by County Medical Examiner Dr Andrew Baker who concluded that Floyd had taken a fatal level of the drug fentanyl. None of this mattered to fact-free, question-free, Woke. Floyd's death was followed by worldwide protests against police brutality amid calls to defund the police. Throwing babies out with the bathwater is a Woke speciality. In the wake of the murder of British woman Sarah Everard a Green Party member of the House of Lords, Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (Nincompoopia would have been better), called for a 6pm curfew for all men. This would be in breach of the Geneva Conventions on war crimes which ban collective punishment, but that would never have crossed the black and white Woke mind of Baroness Nincompoopia who would have been far too convinced of her own self-righteousness to compute such details. Many American cities did defund the police in the face of Floyd riots

and after \$15 million was deleted from the police budget in Washington DC under useless Woke mayor Muriel Bowser car-jacking alone rose by 300 percent and within six months the US capital recorded its highest murder rate in 15 years. The same happened in Chicago and other cities in line with the Cult/Soros plan to bring fear to streets and neighbourhoods by reducing the police, releasing violent criminals and not prosecuting crime. This is the mob-rule agenda that I have warned in the books was coming for so long. Shootings in the area of Minneapolis where Floyd was arrested increased by 2,500 percent compared with the year before. Defunding the police over George Floyd has led to a big increase in dead people with many of them black. Police protection for politicians making these decisions stayed the same or increased as you would expect from professional hypocrites. The Cult doesn't actually want to abolish the police. It wants to abolish local control over the police and hand it to federal government as the psychopaths advance the Hunger Games Society. Many George Floyd protests turned into violent riots with black stores and businesses destroyed by fire and looting across America fuelled by Black Lives Matter. Woke doesn't do irony. If you want civil rights you must loot the liquor store and the supermarket and make off with a smart TV. It's the only way.

It's not a race war – it's a class war

Black people are patronised by privileged blacks and whites alike and told they are victims of white supremacy. I find it extraordinary to watch privileged blacks supporting the very system and bloodline networks behind the slave trade and parroting the same Cult-serving manipulative crap of their privileged white, often billionaire, associates. It is indeed not a race war but a class war and colour is just a diversion. Black Senator Cory Booker and black Congresswoman Maxine Waters, more residents of Nincompoopia, personify this. Once you tell people they are victims of someone else you devalue both their own responsibility for their plight and the power they have to impact on their reality and experience. Instead

we have: 'You are only in your situation because of whiteness – turn on them and everything will change.' It won't change. Nothing changes in our lives unless *we* change it. Crucial to that is never seeing yourself as a victim and always as the creator of your reality. Life is a simple sequence of choice and consequence. Make different choices and you create different consequences. *You* have to make those choices – not Black Lives Matter, the Woke Mafia and anyone else that seeks to dictate your life. Who are they these Wokers, an emotional and psychological road traffic accident, to tell you what to do? Personal empowerment is the last thing the Cult and its Black Lives Matter want black people or anyone else to have. They claim to be defending the underdog while *creating* and perpetuating the underdog. The Cult's worst nightmare is human unity and if they are going to keep blacks, whites and every other race under economic servitude and control then the focus must be diverted from what they have in common to what they can be manipulated to believe divides them. Blacks have to be told that their poverty and plight is the fault of the white bloke living on the street in the same poverty and with the same plight they are experiencing. The difference is that your plight black people is due to him, a white supremacist with 'white privilege' living on the street. Don't unite as one human family against your mutual oppressors and suppressors – fight the oppressor with the white face who is as financially deprived as you are. The Cult knows that as its 'Covid' agenda moves into still new levels of extremism people are going to respond and it has been spreading the seeds of disunity everywhere to stop a united response to the evil that targets *all of us*.

Racist attacks on 'whiteness' are getting ever more outrageous and especially through the American Democratic Party which has an appalling history for anti-black racism. Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi all eulogised about Senator Robert Byrd at his funeral in 2010 after a nearly 60-year career in Congress. Byrd was a brutal Ku Klux Klan racist and a violent abuser of Cathy O'Brien in MKUltra. He said he would never fight in the military 'with a negro by my side' and 'rather I should die a thousand times,

and see Old Glory trampled in the dirt never to rise again, than to see this beloved land of ours become degraded by race mongrels, a throwback to the blackest specimen from the wilds'. Biden called Byrd a 'very close friend and mentor'. These 'Woke' hypocrites are not anti-racist they are anti-poor and anti-people not of their perceived class. Here is an illustration of the scale of anti-white racism to which we have now descended. Seriously Woke and moronic *New York Times* contributor Damon Young described whiteness as a 'virus' that 'like other viruses will not die until there are no bodies left for it to infect'. He went on: '... the only way to stop it is to locate it, isolate it, extract it, and kill it.' Young can say that as a black man with no consequences when a white man saying the same in reverse would be facing a jail sentence. *That's* racism. We had super-Woke numbskull senators Tammy Duckworth and Mazie Hirono saying they would object to future Biden Cabinet appointments if he did not nominate more Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Never mind the ability of the candidate what do they look like? Duckworth said: 'I will vote for racial minorities and I will vote for LGBTQ, but anyone else I'm not voting for.' Appointing people on the grounds of race is illegal, but that was not a problem for this ludicrous pair. They were on-message and that's a free pass in any situation.

Critical race racism

White children are told at school they are intrinsically racist as they are taught the divisive 'critical race theory'. This claims that the law and legal institutions are inherently racist and that race is a socially constructed concept used by white people to further their economic and political interests at the expense of people of colour. White is a 'virus' as we've seen. Racial inequality results from 'social, economic, and legal differences that white people create between races to maintain white interests which leads to poverty and criminality in minority communities'. I must tell that to the white guy sleeping on the street. The principal of East Side Community School in New York sent white parents a manifesto that called on

them to become 'white traitors' and advocate for full 'white abolition'. These people are teaching your kids when they urgently need a psychiatrist. The 'school' included a chart with 'eight white identities' that ranged from 'white supremacist' to 'white abolition' and defined the behaviour white people must follow to end 'the regime of whiteness'. Woke blacks and their privileged white associates are acting exactly like the slave owners of old and Ku Klux Klan racists like Robert Byrd. They are too full of their own self-purity to see that, but it's true. Racism is not a body type; it's a state of mind that can manifest through any colour, creed or culture.

Another racial fraud is '*equity*'. Not equality of treatment and opportunity – equity. It's a term spun as equality when it means something very different. Equality in its true sense is a raising up while 'equity' is a race to the bottom. Everyone in the same level of poverty is 'equity'. Keep everyone down – that's equity. The Cult doesn't want anyone in the human family to be empowered and BLM leaders, like all these 'anti-racist' organisations, continue their privileged, pampered existence by perpetuating the perception of gathering racism. When is the last time you heard an 'anti-racist' or 'anti-Semitism' organisation say that acts of racism and discrimination have *fallen*? It's not in the interests of their fundraising and power to influence and the same goes for the professional soccer anti-racism operation, Kick It Out. Two things confirmed that the Black Lives Matter riots in the summer of 2020 were Cult creations. One was that while anti-lockdown protests were condemned in this same period for 'transmitting 'Covid' the authorities supported mass gatherings of Black Lives Matter supporters. I even saw self-deluding people claiming to be doctors say the two types of protest were not the same. No – the non-existent 'Covid' was in favour of lockdowns and attacked those that protested against them while 'Covid' supported Black Lives Matter and kept well away from its protests. The whole thing was a joke and as lockdown protestors were arrested, often brutally, by reframed Face-Nappies we had the grotesque sight of police officers taking the knee to Black Lives Matter, a Cult-funded Marxist

organisation that supports violent riots and wants to destroy the nuclear family and white people.

He's not white? Shucks!

Woke obsession with race was on display again when ten people were shot dead in Boulder, Colorado, in March, 2021. Cult-owned Woke TV channels like CNN said the shooter appeared to be a white man and Wokers were on Twitter condemning 'violent white men' with the usual mantras. Then the shooter's name was released as Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, an anti-Trump Arab-American, and the sigh of disappointment could be heard five miles away. Never mind that ten people were dead and what that meant for their families. Race baiting was all that mattered to these sick Cult-serving people like Barack Obama who exploited the deaths to further divide America on racial grounds which is his job for the Cult. This is the man that 'racist' white Americans made the first black president of the United States and then gave him a second term. Not-very-bright Obama has become filthy rich on the back of that and today appears to have a big influence on the Biden administration. Even so he's still a downtrodden black man and a victim of white supremacy. This disingenuous fraud reveals the contempt he has for black people when he puts on a Deep South Alabama accent whenever he talks to them, no, *at* them.

Another BLM red flag was how the now fully-Woke (fully-Cult) and fully-virtue-signalled professional soccer authorities had their teams taking the knee before every match in support of Marxist Black Lives Matter. Soccer authorities and clubs displayed 'Black Lives Matter' on the players' shirts and flashed the name on electronic billboards around the pitch. Any fans that condemned what is a Freemasonic taking-the-knee ritual were widely condemned as you would expect from the Woke virtue-signallers of professional sport and the now fully-Woke media. We have reverse racism in which you are banned from criticising any race or culture except for white people for whom anything goes – say what you like, no problem. What has this got to do with racial harmony and

equality? We've had black supremacists from Black Lives Matter telling white people to fall to their knees in the street and apologise for their white supremacy. Black supremacists acting like white supremacist slave owners of the past couldn't breach their self-obsessed, race-obsessed sense of self-purity. Joe Biden appointed a race-obsessed black supremacist Kristen Clarke to head the Justice Department Civil Rights Division. Clarke claimed that blacks are endowed with 'greater mental, physical and spiritual abilities' than whites. If anyone reversed that statement they would be vilified. Clarke is on-message so no problem. She's never seen a black-white situation in which the black figure is anything but a virtuous victim and she heads the Civil Rights Division which should treat everyone the same or it isn't civil rights. Another perception of the Renegade Mind: If something or someone is part of the Cult agenda they will be supported by Woke governments and media no matter what. If they're not, they will be condemned and censored. It really is that simple and so racist Clarke prospers despite (make that because of) her racism.

The end of culture

Biden's administration is full of such racial, cultural and economic bias as the Cult requires the human family to be divided into warring factions. We are now seeing racially-segregated graduations and everything, but everything, is defined through the lens of perceived 'racism'. We have 'racist' mathematics, 'racist' food and even 'racist' *plants*. World famous Kew Gardens in London said it was changing labels on plants and flowers to tell its pre-'Covid' more than two million visitors a year how racist they are. Kew director Richard Deverell said this was part of an effort to 'move quickly to decolonise collections' after they were approached by one Ajay Chhabra 'an actor with an insight into how sugar cane was linked to slavery'. They are *plants* you idiots. 'Decolonisation' in the Woke manual really means colonisation of society with its mentality and by extension colonisation by the Cult. We are witnessing a new Chinese-style 'Cultural Revolution' so essential to the success of all

Marxist takeovers. Our cultural past and traditions have to be swept away to allow a new culture to be built-back-better. Woke targeting of long-standing Western cultural pillars including historical monuments and cancelling of historical figures is what happened in the Mao revolution in China which 'purged remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society' and installed Maoism as the dominant ideology'. For China see the Western world today and for 'dominant ideology' see Woke. Better still see Marxism or Maoism. The 'Covid' hoax has specifically sought to destroy the arts and all elements of Western culture from people meeting in a pub or restaurant to closing theatres, music venues, sports stadiums, places of worship and even banning *singing*. Destruction of Western society is also why criticism of any religion is banned except for Christianity which again is the dominant religion as white is the numerically-dominant race. Christianity may be fading rapidly, but its history and traditions are weaved through the fabric of Western society. Delete the pillars and other structures will follow until the whole thing collapses. I am not a Christian defending that religion when I say that. I have no religion. It's just a fact. To this end Christianity has itself been turned Woke to usher its own downfall and its ranks are awash with 'change agents' – knowing and unknowing – at every level including Pope Francis (*definitely* knowing) and the clueless Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby (possibly not, but who can be sure?). Woke seeks to coordinate attacks on Western culture, traditions, and ways of life through 'intersectionality' defined as 'the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups'. Wade through the Orwellian Woke-speak and this means coordinating disparate groups in a common cause to overthrow freedom and liberal values.

The entire structure of public institutions has been infested with Woke – government at all levels, political parties, police, military, schools, universities, advertising, media and trade unions. This abomination has been achieved through the Cult web by appointing

Workers to positions of power and battering non-Workers into line through intimidation, isolation and threats to their job. Many have been fired in the wake of the empathy-deleted, vicious hostility of 'social justice' Workers and the desire of gutless, spineless employers to virtue-signal their Wokeness. Corporations are filled with Workers today, most notably those in Silicon Valley. Ironically at the top they are not Woke at all. They are only exploiting the mentality their Cult masters have created and funded to censor and enslave while the Workers cheer them on until it's their turn. Thus the Woke 'liberal left' is an inversion of the traditional liberal left. Campaigning for justice on the grounds of power and wealth distribution has been replaced by campaigning for identity politics. The genuine traditional left would never have taken money from today's billionaire abusers of fairness and justice and nor would the billionaires have wanted to fund that genuine left. It would not have been in their interests to do so. The division of opinion in those days was between the haves and have nots. This all changed with Cult manipulated and funded identity politics. The division of opinion today is between Workers and non-Workers and not income brackets. Cult corporations and their billionaires may have taken wealth disparity to cataclysmic levels of injustice, but as long as they speak the language of Woke, hand out the dosh to the Woke network and censor the enemy they are 'one of us'. Billionaires who don't give a damn about injustice are laughing at them till their bellies hurt. Workers are not even close to self-aware enough to see that. The transformed 'left' dynamic means that Workers who drone on about 'social justice' are funded by billionaires that have destroyed social justice the world over. It's *why* they are billionaires.

The climate con

Nothing encapsulates what I have said more comprehensively than the hoax of human-caused global warming. I have detailed in my books over the years how Cult operatives and organisations were the pump-primers from the start of the climate con. A purpose-built vehicle for this is the Club of Rome established by the Cult in 1968

with the Rockefellers and Rothschilds centrally involved all along. Their gofer frontman Maurice Strong, a Canadian oil millionaire, hosted the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 where the global 'green movement' really expanded in earnest under the guiding hand of the Cult. The Earth Summit established Agenda 21 through the Cult-created-and-owned United Nations to use the illusion of human-caused climate change to justify the transformation of global society to save the world from climate disaster. It is a No-Problem-Reaction-Solution sold through governments, media, schools and universities as whole generations have been terrified into believing that the world was going to end in their lifetimes unless what old people had inflicted upon them was stopped by a complete restructuring of how everything is done. Chill, kids, it's all a hoax. Such restructuring is precisely what the Cult agenda demands (purely by coincidence of course). Today this has been given the codename of the Great Reset which is only an updated term for Agenda 21 and its associated Agenda 2030. The latter, too, is administered through the UN and was voted into being by the General Assembly in 2015. Both 21 and 2030 seek centralised control of all resources and food right down to the raindrops falling on your own land. These are some of the demands of Agenda 21 established in 1992. See if you recognise this society emerging today:

- End national sovereignty
- State planning and management of all land resources, ecosystems, deserts, forests, mountains, oceans and fresh water; agriculture; rural development; biotechnology; and ensuring '*equity*'
- The state to 'define the role' of business and financial resources
- Abolition of private property
- 'Restructuring' the family unit (see BLM)
- Children raised by the state
- People told what their job will be
- Major restrictions on movement
- Creation of 'human settlement zones'

- Mass resettlement as people are forced to vacate land where they live
- Dumbing down education
- Mass global depopulation in pursuit of all the above

The United Nations was created as a Trojan horse for world government. With the climate con of critical importance to promoting that outcome you would expect the UN to be involved. Oh, it's involved all right. The UN is promoting Agenda 21 and Agenda 2030 justified by 'climate change' while also driving the climate hoax through its Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), one of the world's most corrupt organisations. The IPCC has been lying ferociously and constantly since the day it opened its doors with the global media hanging unquestioningly on its every mendacious word. The Green movement is entirely Woke and has long lost its original environmental focus since it was co-opted by the Cult. An obsession with 'global warming' has deleted its values and scrambled its head. I experienced a small example of what I mean on a beautiful country walk that I have enjoyed several times a week for many years. The path merged into the fields and forests and you felt at one with the natural world. Then a 'Green' organisation, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, took over part of the land and proceeded to cut down a large number of trees, including mature ones, to install a horrible big, bright steel 'this-is-ours-stay-out' fence that destroyed the whole atmosphere of this beautiful place. No one with a feel for nature would do that. Day after day I walked to the sound of chainsaws and a magnificent mature weeping willow tree that I so admired was cut down at the base of the trunk. When I challenged a Woke young girl in a green shirt (of course) about this vandalism she replied: 'It's a weeping willow – it will grow back.' This is what people are paying for when they donate to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and many other 'green' organisations today. It is not the environmental movement that I knew and instead has become a support-system – as with Extinction Rebellion – for a very dark agenda.

Private jets for climate justice

The Cult-owned, Gates-funded, World Economic Forum and its founder Klaus Schwab were behind the emergence of Greta Thunberg to harness the young behind the climate agenda and she was invited to speak to the world at ... the UN. Schwab published a book, *Covid-19: The Great Reset* in 2020 in which he used the 'Covid' hoax and the climate hoax to lay out a new society straight out of Agenda 21 and Agenda 2030. Bill Gates followed in early 2021 when he took time out from destroying the world to produce a book in his name about the way to save it. Gates flies across the world in private jets and admitted that 'I probably have one of the highest greenhouse gas footprints of anyone on the planet ... my personal flying alone is gigantic.' He has also bid for the planet's biggest private jet operator. Other climate change saviours who fly in private jets include John Kerry, the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, and actor Leonardo DiCaprio, a 'UN Messenger of Peace with special focus on climate change'. These people are so full of bullshit they could corner the market in manure. We mustn't be sceptical, though, because the Gates book, *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need*, is a genuine attempt to protect the world and not an obvious pile of excrement attributed to a mega-psychopath aimed at selling his masters' plans for humanity. The Gates book and the other shite-pile by Klaus Schwab could have been written by the same person and may well have been. Both use 'climate change' and 'Covid' as the excuses for their new society and by coincidence the Cult's World Economic Forum and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation promote the climate hoax and hosted Event 201 which pre-empted with a 'simulation' the very 'coronavirus' hoax that would be simulated for real on humanity within weeks. The British 'royal' family is promoting the 'Reset' as you would expect through Prince 'climate change caused the war in Syria' Charles and his hapless son Prince William who said that we must 'reset our relationship with nature and our trajectory as a species' to avoid a climate disaster. Amazing how many promoters of the 'Covid' and 'climate change' control

systems are connected to Gates and the World Economic Forum. A 'study' in early 2021 claimed that carbon dioxide emissions must fall by the equivalent of a global lockdown roughly every two years for the next decade to save the planet. The 'study' appeared in the same period that the Schwab mob claimed in a video that lockdowns destroying the lives of billions are good because they make the earth 'quieter' with less 'ambient noise'. They took down the video amid a public backlash for such arrogant, empathy-deleted stupidity. You see, however, where they are going with this. Corinne Le Quéré, a professor at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of East Anglia, was lead author of the climate lockdown study, and she writes for ... the World Economic Forum. Gates calls in 'his' book for changing 'every aspect of the economy' (long-time Cult agenda) and for humans to eat synthetic 'meat' (predicted in my books) while cows and other farm animals are eliminated. Australian TV host and commentator Alan Jones described what carbon emission targets would mean for farm animals in Australia alone if emissions were reduced as demanded by 35 percent by 2030 and zero by 2050:

Well, let's take agriculture, the total emissions from agriculture are about 75 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, equivalent. Now reduce that by 35 percent and you have to come down to 50 million tonnes, I've done the maths. So if you take for example 1.5 million cows, you're going to have to reduce the herd by 525,000 [by] 2030, nine years, that's 58,000 cows a year. The beef herd's 30 million, reduce that by 35 percent, that's 10.5 million, which means 1.2 million cattle have to go every year between now and 2030. This is insanity!

There are 75 million sheep. Reduce that by 35 percent, that's 26 million sheep, that's almost 3 million a year. So under the Paris Agreement over 30 million beasts, dairy cows, cattle, pigs and sheep would go. More than 8,000 every minute of every hour for the next decade, do these people know what they're talking about?

Clearly they don't at the level of campaigners, politicians and administrators. The Cult *does* know; that's the outcome it wants. We are faced with not just a war on humanity. Animals and the natural world are being targeted and I have been saying since the 'Covid' hoax began that the plan eventually was to claim that the 'deadly virus' is able to jump from animals, including farm animals and

domestic pets, to humans. Just before this book went into production came this story: 'Russia registers world's first Covid-19 vaccine for cats & dogs as makers of Sputnik V warn pets & farm animals could spread virus'. The report said 'top scientists warned that the deadly pathogen could soon begin spreading through homes and farms' and 'the next stage is the infection of farm and domestic animals'. Know the outcome and you'll see the journey. Think what that would mean for animals and keep your eye on a term called zoonosis or zoonotic diseases which transmit between animals and humans. The Cult wants to break the connection between animals and people as it does between people and people. Farm animals fit with the Cult agenda to transform food from natural to synthetic.

The gas of life is killing us

There can be few greater examples of Cult inversion than the condemnation of carbon dioxide as a dangerous pollutant when it is the gas of life. Without it the natural world would be dead and so we would all be dead. We breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide while plants produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. It is a perfect symbiotic relationship that the Cult wants to dismantle for reasons I will come to in the final two chapters. Gates, Schwab, other Cult operatives and mindless repeaters, want the world to be 'carbon neutral' by at least 2050 and the earlier the better. 'Zero carbon' is the cry echoed by lunatics calling for 'Zero Covid' when we already have it. These carbon emission targets will deindustrialise the world in accordance with Cult plans – the post-industrial, post-democratic society – and with so-called renewables like solar and wind not coming even close to meeting human energy needs blackouts and cold are inevitable. Texans got the picture in the winter of 2021 when a snow storm stopped wind turbines and solar panels from working and the lights went down along with water which relies on electricity for its supply system. Gates wants everything to be powered by electricity to ensure that his masters have the kill switch to stop all human activity, movement, cooking, water and warmth any time they like. The climate lie is so

stupendously inverted that it claims we must urgently reduce carbon dioxide when we *don't have enough*.

Co2 in the atmosphere is a little above 400 parts per million when the optimum for plant growth is 2,000 ppm and when it falls anywhere near 150 ppm the natural world starts to die and so do we. It fell to as low as 280 ppm in an 1880 measurement in Hawaii and rose to 413 ppm in 2019 with industrialisation which is why the planet has become *greener* in the industrial period. How insane then that psychopathic madman Gates is not satisfied only with blocking the rise of Co2. He's funding technology to suck it out of the atmosphere. The reason why will become clear. The industrial era is not destroying the world through Co2 and has instead turned around a potentially disastrous ongoing fall in Co2. Greenpeace co-founder and scientist Patrick Moore walked away from Greenpeace in 1986 and has exposed the green movement for fear-mongering and lies. He said that 500 million years ago there was *17 times* more Co2 in the atmosphere than we have today and levels have been falling for hundreds of millions of years. In the last 150 million years Co2 levels in Earth's atmosphere had reduced by *90 percent*. Moore said that by the time humanity began to unlock carbon dioxide from fossil fuels we were at '38 seconds to midnight' and in that sense: 'Humans are [the Earth's] salvation.' Moore made the point that only half the Co2 emitted by fossil fuels stays in the atmosphere and we should remember that all pollution pouring from chimneys that we are told is carbon dioxide is in fact nothing of the kind. It's pollution. Carbon dioxide is an invisible gas.

William Happer, Professor of Physics at Princeton University and long-time government adviser on climate, has emphasised the Co2 deficiency for maximum growth and food production. Greenhouse growers don't add carbon dioxide for a bit of fun. He said that most of the warming in the last 100 years, after the earth emerged from the super-cold period of the 'Little Ice Age' into a natural warming cycle, was over by 1940. Happer said that a peak year for warming in 1988 can be explained by a 'monster El Nino' which is a natural and cyclical warming of the Pacific that has nothing to do with 'climate

change'. He said the effect of Co2 could be compared to painting a wall with red paint in that once two or three coats have been applied it didn't matter how much more you slapped on because the wall will not get much redder. Almost all the effect of the rise in Co2 has already happened, he said, and the volume in the atmosphere would now have to *double* to increase temperature by a single degree. Climate hoaxers know this and they have invented the most ridiculously complicated series of 'feedback' loops to try to overcome this rather devastating fact. You hear puppet Greta going on cluelessly about feedback loops and this is why.

The Sun affects temperature? No you *climate denier*

Some other nonsense to contemplate: Climate graphs show that rises in temperature do not follow rises in Co2 – *it's the other way round* with a lag between the two of some 800 years. If we go back 800 years from present time we hit the Medieval Warm Period when temperatures were higher than now without any industrialisation and this was followed by the Little Ice Age when temperatures plummeted. The world was still emerging from these centuries of serious cold when many climate records began which makes the ever-repeated line of the 'hottest year since records began' meaningless when you are not comparing like with like. The coldest period of the Little Ice Age corresponded with the lowest period of sunspot activity when the Sun was at its least active. Proper scientists will not be at all surprised by this when it confirms the obvious fact that earth temperature is affected by the scale of Sun activity and the energetic power that it subsequently emits; but when is the last time you heard a climate hoaxer talking about the Sun as a source of earth temperature?? Everything has to be focussed on Co2 which makes up just 0.117 percent of so-called greenhouse gases and only a fraction of even that is generated by human activity. The rest is natural. More than 90 percent of those greenhouse gases are water vapour and clouds ([Fig 9](#)). Ban moisture I say. Have you noticed that the climate hoaxers no longer use the polar bear as their promotion image? That's because far from becoming extinct polar

bear communities are stable or thriving. Joe Bastardi, American meteorologist, weather forecaster and outspoken critic of the climate lie, documents in his book *The Climate Chronicles* how weather patterns and events claimed to be evidence of climate change have been happening since long before industrialisation: 'What happened before naturally is happening again, as is to be expected given the cyclical nature of the climate due to the design of the planet.' If you read the detailed background to the climate hoax in my other books you will shake your head and wonder how anyone could believe the crap which has spawned a multi-trillion dollar industry based on absolute garbage (see HIV causes AIDs and Sars-Cov-2 causes 'Covid-19'). Climate and 'Covid' have much in common given they have the same source. They both have the contradictory *everything* factor in which everything is explained by reference to them. It's hot – 'it's climate change'. It's cold – 'it's climate change'. I got a sniffle – 'it's Covid'. I haven't got a sniffle – 'it's Covid'. Not having a sniffle has to be a symptom of 'Covid'. Everything is and not having a sniffle is especially dangerous if you are a slow walker. For sheer audacity I offer you a Cambridge University 'study' that actually linked 'Covid' to 'climate change'. It had to happen eventually. They concluded that climate change played a role in 'Covid-19' spreading from animals to humans because ... wait for it ... I kid you not ... *the two groups were forced closer together as populations grow*. Er, that's it. The whole foundation on which this depended was that 'Bats are the likely zoonotic origin of SARS-CoV-1 and SARS-CoV-2'. Well, they are not. They are nothing to do with it. Apart from bats not being the origin and therefore 'climate change' effects on bats being irrelevant I am in awe of their academic insight. Where would we be without them? Not where we are that's for sure.

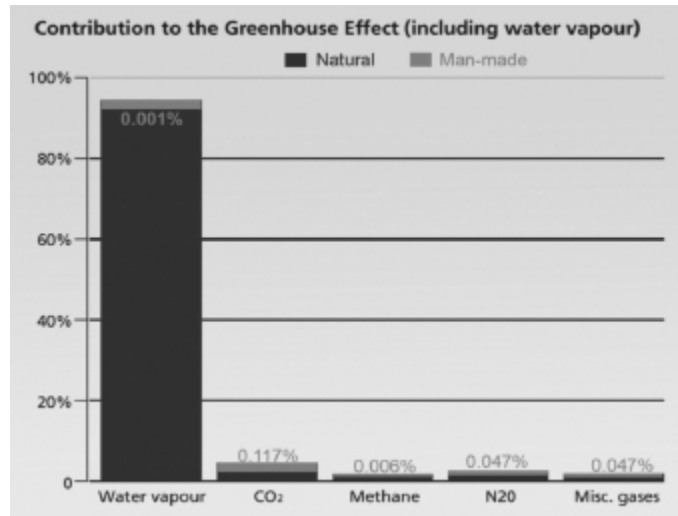


Figure 9: The idea that the gas of life is disastrously changing the climate is an insult to brain cell activity.

One other point about the weather is that climate modification is now well advanced and not every major weather event is natural – or earthquake come to that. I cover this subject at some length in other books. China is openly planning a rapid expansion of its weather modification programme which includes changing the climate in an area more than one and a half times the size of India. China used weather manipulation to ensure clear skies during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. I have quoted from US military documents detailing how to employ weather manipulation as a weapon of war and they did that in the 1960s and 70s during the conflict in Vietnam with Operation Popeye manipulating monsoon rains for military purposes. Why would there be international treaties on weather modification if it wasn't possible? Of course it is. Weather is energetic information and it can be changed.

How was the climate hoax pulled off? See 'Covid'

If you can get billions to believe in a 'virus' that doesn't exist you can get them to believe in human-caused climate change that doesn't exist. Both are being used by the Cult to transform global society in the way it has long planned. Both hoaxes have been achieved in pretty much the same way. First you declare a lie is a fact. There's a

'virus' you call SARS-Cov-2 or humans are warming the planet with their behaviour. Next this becomes, via Cult networks, the foundation of government, academic and science policy and belief. Those who parrot the mantra are given big grants to produce research that confirms the narrative is true and ever more 'symptoms' are added to make the 'virus'/'climate change' sound even more scary. Scientists and researchers who challenge the narrative have their grants withdrawn and their careers destroyed. The media promote the lie as the unquestionable truth and censor those with an alternative view or evidence. A great percentage of the population believe what they are told as the lie becomes an everybody-knows-that and the believing-masses turn on those with a mind of their own. The technique has been used endlessly throughout human history. Wokers are the biggest promoters of the climate lie *and* 'Covid' fascism because their minds are owned by the Cult; their sense of self-righteous self-purity knows no bounds; and they exist in a bubble of reality in which facts are irrelevant and only get in the way of looking without seeing.

Running through all of this like veins in a blue cheese is control of information, which means control of perception, which means control of behaviour, which collectively means control of human society. The Cult owns the global media and Silicon Valley fascists for the simple reason that it *has* to. Without control of information it can't control perception and through that human society. Examine every facet of the Cult agenda and you will see that anything supporting its introduction is never censored while anything pushing back is always censored. I say again: Psychopaths that know why they are doing this must go before Nuremberg trials and those that follow their orders must trot along behind them into the same dock. 'I was just following orders' didn't work the first time and it must not work now. Nuremberg trials must be held all over the world before public juries for politicians, government officials, police, compliant doctors, scientists and virologists, and all Cult operatives such as Gates, Tedros, Fauci, Vallance, Whitty, Ferguson, Zuckerberg, Wojcicki, Brin, Page, Dorsey, the whole damn lot of

them – including, no *especially*, the psychopath psychologists. Without them and the brainless, gutless excuses for journalists that have repeated their lies, none of this could be happening. Nobody can be allowed to escape justice for the psychological and economic Armageddon they are all responsible for visiting upon the human race.

As for the compliant, unquestioning, swathes of humanity, and the self-obsessed, all-knowing ignorance of the Wokers ... don't start me. God help their kids. God help their grandkids. God *help them*.

CHAPTER NINE

We must have it? So what is it?

*Well I won't back down. No, I won't back down. You can stand me
up at the Gates of Hell. But I won't back down*

Tom Petty

I will now focus on the genetically-manipulating 'Covid vaccines' which do not meet this official definition of a vaccine by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC): 'A product that stimulates a person's immune system to produce immunity to a specific disease, protecting the person from that disease.' On that basis 'Covid vaccines' are not a vaccine in that the makers don't even claim they stop infection or transmission.

They are instead part of a multi-levelled conspiracy to change the nature of the human body and what it means to be 'human' and to depopulate an enormous swathe of humanity. What I shall call Human 1.0 is on the cusp of becoming Human 2.0 and for very sinister reasons. Before I get to the 'Covid vaccine' in detail here's some background to vaccines in general. Government regulators do not test vaccines – the makers do – and the makers control which data is revealed and which isn't. Children in America are given 50 vaccine doses by age six and 69 by age 19 and the effect of the whole combined schedule has never been tested. Autoimmune diseases when the immune system attacks its own body have soared in the mass vaccine era and so has disease in general in children and the young. Why wouldn't this be the case when vaccines target the *immune system*? The US government gave Big Pharma drug

companies immunity from prosecution for vaccine death and injury in the 1986 National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act (NCVIA) and since then the government (taxpayer) has been funding compensation for the consequences of Big Pharma vaccines. The criminal and satanic drug giants can't lose and the vaccine schedule has increased dramatically since 1986 for this reason. There is no incentive to make vaccines safe and a big incentive to make money by introducing ever more. Even against a ridiculously high bar to prove vaccine liability, and with the government controlling the hearing in which it is being challenged for compensation, the vaccine court has so far paid out more than \$4 billion. These are the vaccines we are told are safe and psychopaths like Zuckerberg censor posts saying otherwise. The immunity law was even justified by a ruling that vaccines by their nature were 'unavoidably unsafe'.

Check out the ingredients of vaccines and you will be shocked if you are new to this. *They put that in children's bodies?? What??* Try aluminium, a brain toxin connected to dementia, aborted foetal tissue and formaldehyde which is used to embalm corpses. World-renowned aluminium expert Christopher Exley had his research into the health effect of aluminium in vaccines shut down by Keele University in the UK when it began taking funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Research when diseases 'eradicated' by vaccines began to decline and you will find the fall began long *before* the vaccine was introduced. Sometimes the fall even plateaued after the vaccine. Diseases like scarlet fever for which there was no vaccine declined in the same way because of environmental and other factors. A perfect case in point is the polio vaccine. Polio began when lead arsenate was first sprayed as an insecticide and residues remained in food products. Spraying started in 1892 and the first US polio epidemic came in Vermont in 1894. The simple answer was to stop spraying, but Rockefeller-created Big Pharma had a better idea. Polio was decreed to be caused by the *poliovirus* which 'spreads from person to person and can infect a person's spinal cord'. Lead arsenate was replaced by the lethal DDT which had the same effect of causing paralysis by damaging the brain and central nervous

system. Polio plummeted when DDT was reduced and then banned, but the vaccine is still given the credit for something it didn't do. Today by far the biggest cause of polio is the vaccines promoted by Bill Gates. Vaccine justice campaigner Robert Kennedy Jr, son of assassinated (by the Cult) US Attorney General Robert Kennedy, wrote:

In 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) reluctantly admitted that the global explosion in polio is predominantly vaccine strain. The most frightening epidemics in Congo, Afghanistan, and the Philippines, are all linked to vaccines. In fact, by 2018, 70% of global polio cases were vaccine strain.

Vaccines make fortunes for Cult-owned Gates and Big Pharma while undermining the health and immune systems of the population. We had a glimpse of the mentality behind the Big Pharma cartel with a report on WION (World is One News), an international English language TV station based in India, which exposed the extraordinary behaviour of US drug company Pfizer over its 'Covid vaccine'. The WION report told how Pfizer had made fantastic demands of Argentina, Brazil and other countries in return for its 'vaccine'. These included immunity from prosecution, even for Pfizer negligence, government insurance to protect Pfizer from law suits and handing over as collateral sovereign assets of the country to include Argentina's bank reserves, military bases and embassy buildings. Pfizer demanded the same of Brazil in the form of waiving sovereignty of its assets abroad; exempting Pfizer from Brazilian laws; and giving Pfizer immunity from all civil liability. This is a 'vaccine' developed with government funding. Big Pharma is evil incarnate as a creation of the Cult and all must be handed tickets to Nuremberg.

Phantom 'vaccine' for a phantom 'disease'

I'll expose the 'Covid vaccine' fraud and then go on to the wider background of why the Cult has set out to 'vaccinate' every man, woman and child on the planet for an alleged 'new disease' with a survival rate of 99.77 percent (or more) even by the grotesquely-

manipulated figures of the World Health Organization and Johns Hopkins University. The 'infection' to 'death' ratio is 0.23 to 0.15 percent according to Stanford epidemiologist Dr John Ioannidis and while estimates vary the danger remains tiny. I say that if the truth be told the fake infection to fake death ratio is zero. Never mind all the evidence I have presented here and in *The Answer* that there is no 'virus' let us just focus for a moment on that death-rate figure of say 0.23 percent. The figure includes all those worldwide who have tested positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' and then died within 28 days or even longer of any other cause – *any other cause*. Now subtract all those illusory 'Covid' deaths on the global data sheets from the 0.23 percent. What do you think you would be left with? *Zero*. A vaccination has never been successfully developed for a so-called coronavirus. They have all failed at the animal testing stage when they caused hypersensitivity to what they were claiming to protect against and made the impact of a disease far worse. Cult-owned vaccine corporations got around that problem this time by bypassing animal trials, going straight to humans and making the length of the 'trials' before the public rollout as short as they could get away with. Normally it takes five to ten years or more to develop vaccines that still cause demonstrable harm to many people and that's without including the long-term effects that are never officially connected to the vaccination. 'Covid' non-vaccines have been officially produced and approved in a matter of months from a standing start and part of the reason is that (a) they were developed before the 'Covid' hoax began and (b) they are based on computer programs and not natural sources. Official non-trials were so short that government agencies gave *emergency*, not full, approval. 'Trials' were not even completed and full approval cannot be secured until they are. Public 'Covid vaccination' is actually a *continuation of the trial*. Drug company 'trials' are not scheduled to end until 2023 by which time a lot of people are going to be dead. Data on which government agencies gave this emergency approval was supplied by the Big Pharma corporations themselves in the form of Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and

others, and this is the case with all vaccines. By its very nature *emergency* approval means drug companies do not have to prove that the 'vaccine' is 'safe and effective'. How could they with trials way short of complete? Government regulators only have to *believe* that they *could* be safe and effective. It is criminal manipulation to get products in circulation with no testing worth the name. Agencies giving that approval are infested with Big Pharma-connected place-people and they act in the interests of Big Pharma (the Cult) and not the public about whom they do not give a damn.

More human lab rats

'Covid vaccines' produced in record time by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna employ a technique *never approved before for use on humans*. They are known as mRNA 'vaccines' and inject a synthetic version of 'viral' mRNA or 'messenger RNA'. The key is in the term 'messenger'. The body works, or doesn't, on the basis of information messaging. Communications are constantly passing between and within the genetic system and the brain. Change those messages and you change the state of the body and even its very nature and you can change psychology and behaviour by the way the brain processes information. I think you are going to see significant changes in personality and perception of many people who have had the 'Covid vaccine' synthetic potions. Insider Aldous Huxley predicted the following in 1961 and mRNA 'vaccines' can be included in the term 'pharmacological methods':

There will be, in the next generation or so, a pharmacological method of making people love their servitude, and producing dictatorship without tears, so to speak, producing a kind of painless concentration camp for entire societies, so that people will in fact have their own liberties taken away from them, but rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel by propaganda or brainwashing, or brainwashing enhanced by pharmacological methods. And this seems to be the final revolution.

Apologists claim that mRNA synthetic 'vaccines' don't change the DNA genetic blueprint because RNA does not affect DNA only the other way round. This is so disingenuous. A process called 'reverse

transcription' can convert RNA into DNA and be integrated into DNA in the cell nucleus. This was highlighted in December, 2020, by scientists at Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Geneticists report that more than 40 percent of mammalian genomes results from reverse transcription. On the most basic level if messaging changes then that sequence must lead to changes in DNA which is receiving and transmitting those communications. How can introducing synthetic material into cells not change the cells where DNA is located? The process is known as transfection which is defined as 'a technique to insert foreign nucleic acid (DNA or RNA) into a cell, typically with the intention of altering the properties of the cell'. Researchers at the Sloan Kettering Institute in New York found that changes in messenger RNA can deactivate tumour-suppressing proteins and thereby promote cancer. This is what happens when you mess with messaging. 'Covid vaccine' maker Moderna was founded in 2010 by Canadian stem cell biologist Derrick J. Rossi after his breakthrough discovery in the field of transforming and reprogramming stem cells. These are neutral cells that can be programmed to become any cell including sperm cells. Moderna was therefore founded on the principle of genetic manipulation and has never produced any vaccine or drug before its genetically-manipulating synthetic 'Covid' shite. Look at the name – Mode-RNA or Modify-RNA. Another important point is that the US Supreme Court has ruled that genetically-modified DNA, or complementary DNA (cDNA) synthesized in the laboratory from messenger RNA, can be patented and owned. These psychopaths are doing this to the human body.

Cells replicate synthetic mRNA in the 'Covid vaccines' and in theory the body is tricked into making antigens which trigger antibodies to target the 'virus spike proteins' which as Dr Tom Cowan said have *never been seen*. Cut the crap and these 'vaccines' deliver *self-replicating* synthetic material to the cells with the effect of changing human DNA. The more of them you have the more that process is compounded while synthetic material is all the time self-replicating. 'Vaccine'-maker Moderna describes mRNA as 'like

software for the cell' and so they are messing with the body's software. What happens when you change the software in a computer? Everything changes. For this reason the Cult is preparing a production line of mRNA 'Covid vaccines' and a long list of excuses to use them as with all the 'variants' of a 'virus' never shown to exist. The plan is further to transfer the mRNA technique to other vaccines mostly given to children and young people. The cumulative consequences will be a transformation of human DNA through a constant infusion of synthetic genetic material which will kill many and change the rest. Now consider that governments that have given emergency approval for a vaccine that's not a vaccine; never been approved for humans before; had no testing worth the name; and the makers have been given immunity from prosecution for any deaths or adverse effects suffered by the public. The UK government awarded *permanent legal indemnity* to itself and its employees for harm done when a patient is being treated for 'Covid-19' or 'suspected Covid-19'. That is quite a thought when these are possible 'side-effects' from the 'vaccine' (they are not 'side', they are effects) listed by the US Food and Drug Administration:

Guillain-Barre syndrome; acute disseminated encephalomyelitis; transverse myelitis; encephalitis; myelitis; encephalomyelitis; meningoencephalitis; meningitis; encephalopathy; convulsions; seizures; stroke; narcolepsy; cataplexy; anaphylaxis; acute myocardial infarction (heart attack); myocarditis; pericarditis; autoimmune disease; death; implications for pregnancy, and birth outcomes; other acute demyelinating diseases; non anaphylactic allergy reactions; thrombocytopenia ; disseminated intravascular coagulation; venous thromboembolism; arthritis; arthralgia; joint pain; Kawasaki disease; multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children; vaccine enhanced disease. The latter is the way the 'vaccine' has the potential to make diseases far worse than they would otherwise be.

UK doctor and freedom campaigner Vernon Coleman described the conditions in this list as 'all unpleasant, most of them very serious, and you can't get more serious than death'. The thought that anyone at all has had the 'vaccine' in these circumstances is testament to the potential that humanity has for clueless, unquestioning, stupidity and for many that programmed stupidity has already been terminal.

An insider speaks

Dr Michael Yeadon is a former Vice President, head of research and Chief Scientific Adviser at vaccine giant Pfizer. Yeadon worked on the inside of Big Pharma, but that did not stop him becoming a vocal critic of 'Covid vaccines' and their potential for multiple harms, including infertility in women. By the spring of 2021 he went much further and even used the no, no, term 'conspiracy'. When you begin to see what is going on it is impossible not to do so. Yeadon spoke out in an interview with freedom campaigner James Delingpole and I mentioned earlier how he said that no one had samples of 'the virus'. He explained that the mRNA technique originated in the anti-cancer field and ways to turn on and off certain genes which could be advantageous if you wanted to stop cancer growing out of control. 'That's the origin of them. They are a very unusual application, really.' Yeadon said that treating a cancer patient with an aggressive procedure might be understandable if the alternative was dying, but it was quite another thing to use the same technique as a public health measure. Most people involved wouldn't catch the infectious agent you were vaccinating against and if they did they probably wouldn't die:

If you are really using it as a public health measure you really want to as close as you can get to zero side-effects ... I find it odd that they chose techniques that were really cutting their teeth in the field of oncology and I'm worried that in using gene-based vaccines that have to be injected in the body and spread around the body, get taken up into some cells, and the regulators haven't quite told us which cells they get taken up into ... you are going to be generating a wide range of responses ... with multiple steps each of which could go well or badly.

I doubt the Cult intends it to go well. Yeadon said that you can put any gene you like into the body through the 'vaccine'. 'You can certainly give them a gene that would do them some harm if you wanted.' I was intrigued when he said that when used in the cancer field the technique could turn genes on and off. I explore this process in *The Answer* and with different genes having different functions you could create mayhem – physically and psychologically – if you turned the wrong ones on and the right ones off. I read reports of an experiment by researchers at the University of Washington's school of computer science and engineering in which they encoded DNA to infect computers. The body is itself a biological computer and if human DNA can inflict damage on a computer why can't the computer via synthetic material mess with the human body? It can. The Washington research team said it was possible to insert malicious malware into 'physical DNA strands' and corrupt the computer system of a gene sequencing machine as it 'reads gene letters and stores them as binary digits 0 and 1'. They concluded that hackers could one day use blood or spit samples to access computer systems and obtain sensitive data from police forensics labs or infect genome files. It is at this level of digital interaction that synthetic 'vaccines' need to be seen to get the full picture and that will become very clear later on. Michael Yeadon said it made no sense to give the 'vaccine' to younger people who were in no danger from the 'virus'. What was the benefit? It was all downside with potential effects:

The fact that my government in what I thought was a civilised, rational country, is raining [the 'vaccine'] on people in their 30s and 40s, even my children in their 20s, they're getting letters and phone calls, I know this is not right and any of you doctors who are vaccinating you know it's not right, too. They are not at risk. They are not at risk from the disease, so you are now hoping that the side-effects are so rare that you get away with it. You don't give new technology ... that you don't understand to 100 percent of the population.

Blood clot problems with the AstraZeneca 'vaccine' have been affecting younger people to emphasise the downside risks with no benefit. AstraZeneca's version, produced with Oxford University, does not use mRNA, but still gets its toxic cocktail inside cells where

it targets DNA. The Johnson & Johnson 'vaccine' which uses a similar technique has also produced blood clot effects to such an extent that the United States paused its use at one point. They are all 'gene therapy' (cell modification) procedures and not 'vaccines'. The truth is that once the content of these injections enter cells we have no idea what the effect will be. People can speculate and some can give very educated opinions and that's good. In the end, though, only the makers know what their potions are designed to do and even they won't know every last consequence. Michael Yeadon was scathing about doctors doing what they knew to be wrong. 'Everyone's mute', he said. Doctors in the NHS must know this was not right, coming into work and injecting people. 'I don't know how they sleep at night. I know I couldn't do it. I know that if I were in that position I'd have to quit.' He said he knew enough about toxicology to know this was not a good risk-benefit. Yeadon had spoken to seven or eight university professors and all except two would not speak out publicly. Their universities had a policy that no one said anything that countered the government and its medical advisors. They were afraid of losing their government grants. This is how intimidation has been used to silence the truth at every level of the system. I say silence, but these people could still speak out if they made that choice. Yeadon called them 'moral cowards' – 'This is about your children and grandchildren's lives and you have just buggered off and left it.'

'Variant' nonsense

Some of his most powerful comments related to the alleged 'variants' being used to instil more fear, justify more lockdowns, and introduce more 'vaccines'. He said government claims about 'variants' were nonsense. He had checked the alleged variant 'codes' and they were 99.7 percent identical to the 'original'. This was the human identity difference equivalent to putting a baseball cap on and off or wearing it the other way round. A 0.3 percent difference would make it impossible for that 'variant' to escape immunity from the 'original'. This made no sense of having new 'vaccines' for

‘variants’. He said there would have to be at least a *30 percent* difference for that to be justified and even then he believed the immune system would still recognise what it was. Gates-funded ‘variant modeller’ and ‘vaccine’-pusher John Edmunds might care to comment. Yeadon said drug companies were making new versions of the ‘vaccine’ as a ‘top up’ for ‘variants’. Worse than that, he said, the ‘regulators’ around the world like the MHRA in the UK had got together and agreed that because ‘vaccines’ for ‘variants’ were so similar to the first ‘vaccines’ *they did not have to do safety studies*. How transparently sinister that is. This is when Yeadon said: ‘There is a conspiracy here.’ There was no need for another vaccine for ‘variants’ and yet we were told that there was and the country had shut its borders because of them. ‘They are going into hundreds of millions of arms without passing ‘go’ or any regulator. Why did they do that? Why did they pick this method of making the vaccine?’

The reason had to be something bigger than that it seemed and ‘it’s not protection against the virus’. It’s was a far bigger project that meant politicians and advisers were willing to do things and not do things that knowingly resulted in avoidable deaths – ‘that’s already happened when you think about lockdown and deprivation of health care for a year.’ He spoke of people prepared to do something that results in the avoidable death of their fellow human beings and it not bother them. This is the penny-drop I have been working to get across for more than 30 years – the level of pure evil we are dealing with. Yeadon said his friends and associates could not believe there could be that much evil, but he reminded them of Stalin, Pol Pot and Hitler and of what Stalin had said: ‘One death is a tragedy. A million? A statistic.’ He could not think of a benign explanation for why you need top-up vaccines ‘which I’m sure you don’t’ and for the regulators ‘to just get out of the way and wave them through’. Why would the regulators do that when they were still wrestling with the dangers of the ‘parent’ vaccine? He was clearly shocked by what he had seen since the ‘Covid’ hoax began and now he was thinking the previously unthinkable:

If you wanted to depopulate a significant proportion of the world and to do it in a way that doesn't involve destruction of the environment with nuclear weapons, poisoning everyone with anthrax or something like that, and you wanted plausible deniability while you had a multi-year infectious disease crisis, I actually don't think you could come up with a better plan of work than seems to be in front of me. I can't say that's what they are going to do, but I can't think of a benign explanation why they are doing it.

He said he never thought that they would get rid of 99 percent of humans, but now he wondered. 'If you wanted to that this would be a hell of a way to do it – it would be unstoppable folks.' Yeadon had concluded that those who submitted to the 'vaccine' would be allowed to have some kind of normal life (but for how long?) while screws were tightened to coerce and mandate the last few percent. 'I think they'll put the rest of them in a prison camp. I wish I was wrong, but I don't think I am.' Other points he made included: There were no coronavirus vaccines then suddenly they all come along at the same time; we have no idea of the long term affect with trials so short; coercing or forcing people to have medical procedures is against the Nuremberg Code instigated when the Nazis did just that; people should at least delay having the 'vaccine'; a quick Internet search confirms that masks don't reduce respiratory viral transmission and 'the government knows that'; they have smashed civil society and they know that, too; two dozen peer-reviewed studies show no connection between lockdown and reducing deaths; he knew from personal friends the elite were still flying around and going on holiday while the public were locked down; the elite were not having the 'vaccines'. He was also asked if 'vaccines' could be made to target difference races. He said he didn't know, but the document by the Project for the New American Century in September, 2000, said developing 'advanced forms of biological warfare that can target *specific genotypes* may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool.' Oh, they're evil all right. Of that we can be *absolutely* sure.

Another cull of old people

We have seen from the CDC definition that the mRNA 'Covid vaccine' is not a vaccine and nor are the others that *claim* to reduce 'severity of symptoms' in *some* people, but not protect from infection or transmission. What about all the lies about returning to 'normal' if people were 'vaccinated'? If they are not claimed to stop infection and transmission of the alleged 'virus', how does anything change? This was all lies to manipulate people to take the jabs and we are seeing that now with masks and distancing still required for the 'vaccinated'. How did they think that elderly people with fragile health and immune responses were going to be affected by infusing their cells with synthetic material and other toxic substances? They *knew* that in the short and long term it would be devastating and fatal as the culling of the old that began with the first lockdowns was continued with the 'vaccine'. Death rates in care homes soared immediately residents began to be 'vaccinated' – infused with synthetic material. Brave and committed whistleblower nurses put their careers at risk by exposing this truth while the rest kept their heads down and their mouths shut to put their careers before those they are supposed to care for. A long-time American Certified Nursing Assistant who gave his name as James posted a video in which he described emotionally what happened in his care home when vaccination began. He said that during 2020 very few residents were sick with 'Covid' and no one died during the entire year; but shortly after the Pfizer mRNA injections 14 people died within two weeks and many others were near death. 'They're dropping like flies', he said. Residents who walked on their own before the shot could no longer and they had lost their ability to conduct an intelligent conversation. The home's management said the sudden deaths were caused by a 'super-spreader' of 'Covid-19'. Then how come, James asked, that residents who refused to take the injections were not sick? It was a case of inject the elderly with mRNA synthetic potions and blame their illness and death that followed on the 'virus'. James described what was happening in care homes as 'the greatest crime of genocide this country has ever seen'. Remember the NHS staff nurse from earlier who used the same

word 'genocide' for what was happening with the 'vaccines' and that it was an 'act of human annihilation'. A UK care home whistleblower told a similar story to James about the effect of the 'vaccine' in deaths and 'outbreaks' of illness dubbed 'Covid' after getting the jab. She told how her care home management and staff had zealously imposed government regulations and no one was allowed to even question the official narrative let alone speak out against it. She said the NHS was even worse. Again we see the results of reframing. A worker at a local care home where I live said they had not had a single case of 'Covid' there for almost a year and when the residents were 'vaccinated' they had 19 positive cases in two weeks with eight dying.

It's not the 'vaccine' – honest

The obvious cause and effect was being ignored by the media and most of the public. Australia's health minister Greg Hunt (a former head of strategy at the World Economic Forum) was admitted to hospital after he had the 'vaccine'. He was suffering according to reports from the skin infection 'cellulitis' and it must have been a severe case to have warranted days in hospital. Immediately the authorities said this was nothing to do with the 'vaccine' when an effect of some vaccines is a 'cellulitis-like reaction'. We had families of perfectly healthy old people who died after the 'vaccine' saying that if only they had been given the 'vaccine' earlier they would still be alive. As a numbskull rating that is off the chart. A father of four 'died of Covid' at aged 48 when he was taken ill two days after having the 'vaccine'. The man, a health administrator, had been 'shielding during the pandemic' and had 'not really left the house' until he went for the 'vaccine'. Having the 'vaccine' and then falling ill and dying does not seem to have qualified as a possible cause and effect and 'Covid-19' went on his death certificate. His family said they had no idea how he 'caught the virus'. A family member said: 'Tragically, it could be that going for a vaccination ultimately led to him catching Covid ...The sad truth is that they are never going to know where it came from.' The family warned people to remember

that the virus still existed and was 'very real'. So was their stupidity. Nurses and doctors who had the first round of the 'vaccine' were collapsing, dying and ending up in a hospital bed while they or their grieving relatives were saying they'd still have the 'vaccine' again despite what happened. I kid you not. You mean if your husband returned from the dead he'd have the same 'vaccine' again that killed him??

Doctors at the VCU Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia, said the Johnson & Johnson 'vaccine' was to blame for a man's skin peeling off. Patient Richard Terrell said: 'It all just happened so fast. My skin peeled off. It's still coming off on my hands now.' He said it was stinging, burning and itching and when he bent his arms and legs it was very painful with 'the skin swollen and rubbing against itself'. Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines use mRNA to change the cell while the Johnson & Johnson version uses DNA in a process similar to AstraZeneca's technique. Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca have both had their 'vaccines' paused by many countries after causing serious blood problems. Terrell's doctor Fnu Nutan said he could have died if he hadn't got medical attention. It sounds terrible so what did Nutan and Terrell say about the 'vaccine' now? Oh, they still recommend that people have it. A nurse in a hospital bed 40 minutes after the vaccination and unable to swallow due to throat swelling was told by a doctor that he lost mobility in his arm for 36 hours following the vaccination. What did he say to the ailing nurse? 'Good for you for getting the vaccination.' We are dealing with a serious form of cognitive dissonance madness in both public and medical staff. There is a remarkable correlation between those having the 'vaccine' and trumpeting the fact and suffering bad happenings shortly afterwards. Witold Rogiewicz, a Polish doctor, made a video of his 'vaccination' and ridiculed those who were questioning its safety and the intentions of Bill Gates: 'Vaccinate yourself to protect yourself, your loved ones, friends and also patients. And to mention quickly I have info for anti-vaxxers and anti-Covidors if you want to contact Bill Gates you can do this through me.' He further ridiculed the dangers of 5G. Days later he

was dead, but naturally the vaccination wasn't mentioned in the verdict of 'heart attack'.

Lies, lies and more lies

So many members of the human race have slipped into extreme states of insanity and unfortunately they include reframed doctors and nursing staff. Having a 'vaccine' and dying within minutes or hours is not considered a valid connection while death from any cause within 28 days or longer of a positive test with a test not testing for the 'virus' means 'Covid-19' goes on the death certificate. How could that 'vaccine'-death connection not have been made except by calculated deceit? US figures in the initial rollout period to February 12th, 2020, revealed that a third of the deaths reported to the CDC after 'Covid vaccines' happened within 48 hours. Five men in the UK suffered an 'extremely rare' blood clot problem after having the AstraZeneca 'vaccine', but no causal link was established said the Gates-funded Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) which had given the 'vaccine' emergency approval to be used. Former Pfizer executive Dr Michael Yeadon explained in his interview how the procedures could cause blood coagulation and clots. People who should have been at no risk were dying from blood clots in the brain and he said he had heard from medical doctor friends that people were suffering from skin bleeding and massive headaches. The AstraZeneca 'shot' was stopped by some 20 countries over the blood clotting issue and still the corrupt MHRA, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the World Health Organization said that it should continue to be given even though the EMA admitted that it 'still cannot rule out definitively' a link between blood clotting and the 'vaccine'. Later Marco Cavaleri, head of EMA vaccine strategy, said there was indeed a clear link between the 'vaccine' and thrombosis, but they didn't know why. So much for the trials showing the 'vaccine' is safe. Blood clots were affecting younger people who would be under virtually no danger from 'Covid' even if it existed which makes it all the more stupid and sinister.

The British government responded to public alarm by wheeling out June Raine, the terrifyingly weak infant school headmistress sound-alike who heads the UK MHRA drug 'regulator'. The idea that she would stand up to Big Pharma and government pressure is laughable and she told us that all was well in the same way that she did when allowing untested, never-used-on-humans-before, genetically-manipulating 'vaccines' to be exposed to the public in the first place. Mass lying is the new normal of the 'Covid' era. The MHRA later said 30 cases of rare blood clots had by then been connected with the AstraZeneca 'vaccine' (that means a lot more in reality) while stressing that the benefits of the jab in preventing 'Covid-19' outweighed any risks. A more ridiculous and disingenuous statement with callous disregard for human health it is hard to contemplate. Immediately after the mendacious 'all-clears' two hospital workers in Denmark experienced blood clots and cerebral haemorrhaging following the AstraZeneca jab and one died. Top Norwegian health official Pål Andre Holme said the 'vaccine' was the only common factor: 'There is nothing in the patient history of these individuals that can give such a powerful immune response ... I am confident that the antibodies that we have found are the cause, and I see no other explanation than it being the vaccine which triggers it.' Strokes, a clot or bleed in the brain, were clearly associated with the 'vaccine' from word of mouth and whistleblower reports. Similar consequences followed with all these 'vaccines' that we were told were so safe and as the numbers grew by the day it was clear we were witnessing human carnage.

Learning the hard way

A woman interviewed by UKColumn told how her husband suffered dramatic health effects after the vaccine when he'd been in good health all his life. He went from being a little unwell to losing all feeling in his legs and experiencing 'excruciating pain'. Misdiagnosis followed twice at Accident and Emergency (an 'allergy' and 'sciatica') before he was admitted to a neurology ward where doctors said his serious condition had been caused by the

‘vaccine’. Another seven ‘vaccinated’ people were apparently being treated on the same ward for similar symptoms. The woman said he had the ‘vaccine’ because they believed media claims that it was safe. ‘I didn’t think the government would give out a vaccine that does this to somebody; I believed they would be bringing out a vaccination that would be safe.’ What a tragic way to learn that lesson. Another woman posted that her husband was transporting stroke patients to hospital on almost every shift and when he asked them if they had been ‘vaccinated’ for ‘Covid’ they all replied ‘yes’. One had a ‘massive brain bleed’ the day after his second dose. She said her husband reported the ‘just been vaccinated’ information every time to doctors in A and E only for them to ignore it, make no notes and appear annoyed that it was even mentioned. This particular report cannot be verified, but it expresses a common theme that confirms the monumental underreporting of ‘vaccine’ consequences. Interestingly as the ‘vaccines’ and their brain blood clot/stroke consequences began to emerge the UK National Health Service began a publicity campaign telling the public what to do in the event of a stroke. A Scottish NHS staff nurse who quit in disgust in March, 2021, said:

I have seen traumatic injuries from the vaccine, they’re not getting reported to the yellow card [adverse reaction] scheme, they’re treating the symptoms, not asking why, why it’s happening. It’s just treating the symptoms and when you speak about it you’re dismissed like you’re crazy, I’m not crazy, I’m not crazy because every other colleague I’ve spoken to is terrified to speak out, they’ve had enough.

Videos appeared on the Internet of people uncontrollably shaking after the ‘vaccine’ with no control over muscles, limbs and even their face. A Scottish mother broke out in a severe rash all over her body almost immediately after she was given the AstraZeneca ‘vaccine’. The pictures were horrific. Leigh King, a 41-year-old hairdresser from Lanarkshire said: ‘Never in my life was I prepared for what I was about to experience ... My skin was so sore and constantly hot ... I have never felt pain like this ...’ But don’t you worry, the ‘vaccine’ is perfectly safe. Then there has been the effect on medical

staff who have been pressured to have the 'vaccine' by psychopathic 'health' authorities and government. A London hospital consultant who gave the name K. Polyakova wrote this to the *British Medical Journal* or *BMJ*:

I am currently struggling with ... the failure to report the reality of the morbidity caused by our current vaccination program within the health service and staff population. The levels of sickness after vaccination is unprecedented and staff are getting very sick and some with neurological symptoms which is having a huge impact on the health service function. Even the young and healthy are off for days, some for weeks, and some requiring medical treatment. Whole teams are being taken out as they went to get vaccinated together.

Mandatory vaccination in this instance is stupid, unethical and irresponsible when it comes to protecting our staff and public health. We are in the voluntary phase of vaccination, and encouraging staff to take an unlicensed product that is impacting on their immediate health ... it is clearly stated that these vaccine products do not offer immunity or stop transmission. In which case why are we doing it?

Not to protect health that's for sure. Medical workers are lauded by governments for agenda reasons when they couldn't give a toss about them any more than they can for the population in general. Schools across America faced the same situation as they closed due to the high number of teachers and other staff with bad reactions to the Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson 'Covid vaccines' all of which were linked to death and serious adverse effects. The *BMJ* took down the consultant's comments pretty quickly on the grounds that they were being used to spread 'disinformation'. They were exposing the truth about the 'vaccine' was the real reason. The cover-up is breathtaking.

Hiding the evidence

The scale of the 'vaccine' death cover-up worldwide can be confirmed by comparing official figures with the personal experience of the public. I heard of many people in my community who died immediately or soon after the vaccine that would never appear in the media or even likely on the official totals of 'vaccine' fatalities and adverse reactions when only about ten percent are estimated to be

reported and I have seen some estimates as low as one percent in a Harvard study. In the UK alone by April 29th, 2021, some 757,654 adverse reactions had been officially reported from the Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford/AstraZeneca and Moderna 'vaccines' with more than a thousand deaths linked to jabs and that means an estimated ten times this number in reality from a ten percent reporting rate percentage. That's seven million adverse reactions and 10,000 potential deaths and a one percent reporting rate would be ten times *those* figures. In 1976 the US government pulled the swine flu vaccine after 53 deaths. The UK data included a combined 10,000 eye disorders from the 'Covid vaccines' with more than 750 suffering visual impairment or blindness and again multiply by the estimated reporting percentages. As 'Covid cases' officially fell hospitals virtually empty during the 'Covid crisis' began to fill up with a range of other problems in the wake of the 'vaccine' rollout. The numbers across America have also been catastrophic. Deaths linked to *all* types of vaccine increased by 6,000 *percent* in the first quarter of 2021 compared with 2020. A 39-year-old woman from Ogden, Utah, died four days after receiving a second dose of Moderna's 'Covid vaccine' when her liver, heart and kidneys all failed despite the fact that she had no known medical issues or conditions. Her family sought an autopsy, but Dr Erik Christensen, Utah's chief medical examiner, said proving vaccine injury as a cause of death almost never happened. He could think of only one instance where an autopsy would name a vaccine as the official cause of death and that would be anaphylaxis where someone received a vaccine and died almost instantaneously. 'Short of that, it would be difficult for us to definitively say this is the vaccine,' Christensen said. If that is true this must be added to the estimated ten percent (or far less) reporting rate of vaccine deaths and serious reactions and the conclusion can only be that vaccine deaths and serious reactions – including these 'Covid' potions' – are phenomenally understated in official figures. The same story can be found everywhere. Endless accounts of deaths and serious reactions among the public, medical

and care home staff while official figures did not even begin to reflect this.

Professional script-reader Dr David Williams, a 'top public-health official' in Ontario, Canada, insulted our intelligence by claiming only four serious adverse reactions and no deaths from the more than 380,000 vaccine doses then given. This bore no resemblance to what people knew had happened in their own circles and we had Dirk Huyer in charge of getting millions vaccinated in Ontario while at the same time he was Chief Coroner for the province investigating causes of death including possible death from the vaccine. An aide said he had stepped back from investigating deaths, but evidence indicated otherwise. Rosemary Frei, who secured a Master of Science degree in molecular biology at the Faculty of Medicine at Canada's University of Calgary before turning to investigative journalism, was one who could see that official figures for 'vaccine' deaths and reactions made no sense. She said that doctors seldom reported adverse events and when people got really sick or died after getting a vaccination they would attribute that to anything except the vaccines. It had been that way for years and anyone who wondered aloud whether the 'Covid vaccines' or other shots cause harm is immediately branded as 'anti-vax' and 'anti-science'. This was 'career-threatening' for health professionals. Then there was the huge pressure to support the push to 'vaccinate' billions in the quickest time possible. Frei said:

So that's where we're at today. More than half a million vaccine doses have been given to people in Ontario alone. The rush is on to vaccinate all 15 million of us in the province by September. And the mainstream media are screaming for this to be sped up even more. That all adds up to only a very slim likelihood that we're going to be told the truth by officials about how many people are getting sick or dying from the vaccines.

What is true of Ontario is true of everywhere.

They KNEW – and still did it

The authorities knew what was going to happen with multiple deaths and adverse reactions. The UK government's Gates-funded

and Big Pharma-dominated Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) hired a company to employ AI in compiling the projected reactions to the 'vaccine' that would otherwise be uncountable. The request for applications said: 'The MHRA urgently seeks an Artificial Intelligence (AI) software tool to process the expected high volume of Covid-19 vaccine Adverse Drug Reaction ...' This was from the agency, headed by the disingenuous June Raine, that gave the 'vaccines' emergency approval and the company was hired before the first shot was given. 'We are going to kill and maim you – is that okay?' 'Oh, yes, perfectly fine – I'm very grateful, thank you, doctor.' The range of 'Covid vaccine' adverse reactions goes on for page after page in the MHRA criminally underreported 'Yellow Card' system and includes affects to eyes, ears, skin, digestion, blood and so on. Raine's MHRA amazingly claimed that the 'overall safety experience ... is so far as expected from the clinical trials'. The death, serious adverse effects, deafness and blindness were *expected*? When did they ever mention that? If these human tragedies were expected then those that gave approval for the use of these 'vaccines' must be guilty of crimes against humanity including murder – a definition of which is 'killing a person with malice aforethought or with recklessness manifesting extreme indifference to the value of human life.' People involved at the MHRA, the CDC in America and their equivalent around the world must go before Nuremberg trials to answer for their callous inhumanity. We are only talking here about the immediate effects of the 'vaccine'. The longer-term impact of the DNA synthetic manipulation is the main reason they are so hysterically desperate to inoculate the entire global population in the shortest possible time.

Africa and the developing world are a major focus for the 'vaccine' depopulation agenda and a mass vaccination sales-pitch is underway thanks to caring people like the Rockefellers and other Cult assets. The Rockefeller Foundation, which pre-empted the 'Covid pandemic' in a document published in 2010 that 'predicted' what happened a decade later, announced an initial \$34.95 million grant in February, 2021, 'to ensure more equitable access to Covid-19

testing and vaccines' among other things in Africa in collaboration with '24 organizations, businesses, and government agencies'. The pan-Africa initiative would focus on 10 countries: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia'. Rajiv Shah, President of the Rockefeller Foundation and former administrator of CIA-controlled USAID, said that if Africa was not mass-vaccinated (to change the DNA of its people) it was a 'threat to all of humanity' and not fair on Africans. When someone from the Rockefeller Foundation says they want to do something to help poor and deprived people and countries it is time for a belly-laugh. They are doing this out of the goodness of their 'heart' because 'vaccinating' the entire global population is what the 'Covid' hoax set out to achieve. Official 'decolonisation' of Africa by the Cult was merely a prelude to financial colonisation on the road to a return to physical colonisation. The 'vaccine' is vital to that and the sudden and convenient death of the 'Covid' sceptic president of Tanzania can be seen in its true light. A lot of people in Africa are aware that this is another form of colonisation and exploitation and they need to stand their ground.

The 'vaccine is working' scam

A potential problem for the Cult was that the 'vaccine' is meant to change human DNA and body messaging and not to protect anyone from a 'virus' never shown to exist. The vaccine couldn't work because it was not designed to work and how could they make it *appear* to be working so that more people would have it? This was overcome by lowering the amplification rate of the PCR test to produce fewer 'cases' and therefore fewer 'deaths'. Some of us had been pointing out since March, 2020, that the amplification rate of the test not testing for the 'virus' had been made artificially high to generate positive tests which they could call 'cases' to justify lockdowns. The World Health Organization recommended an absurdly high 45 amplification cycles to ensure the high positives required by the Cult and then remained silent on the issue until January 20th, 2021 – Biden's Inauguration Day. This was when the

'vaccinations' were seriously underway and on that day the WHO recommended after discussions with America's CDC that laboratories *lowered their testing amplification*. Dr David Samadi, a certified urologist and health writer, said the WHO was encouraging all labs to reduce their cycle count for PCR tests. He said the current cycle was much too high and was 'resulting in any particle being declared a positive case'. Even one mainstream news report I saw said this meant the number of 'Covid' infections may have been 'dramatically inflated'. Oh, just a little bit. The CDC in America issued new guidance to laboratories in April, 2021, to use 28 cycles *but only for 'vaccinated' people*. The timing of the CDC/WHO interventions were cynically designed to make it appear the 'vaccines' were responsible for falling cases and deaths when the real reason can be seen in the following examples. New York's state lab, the Wadsworth Center, identified 872 positive tests in July, 2020, based on a threshold of 40 cycles. When the figure was lowered to 35 cycles 43 percent of the 872 were no longer 'positives'. At 30 cycles the figure was 63 percent. A Massachusetts lab found that between 85 to 90 percent of people who tested positive in July with a cycle threshold of 40 would be negative at 30 cycles, Ashish Jha, MD, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, said: 'I'm really shocked that it could be that high ... Boy, does it really change the way we need to be thinking about testing.' I'm shocked that I could see the obvious in the spring of 2020, with no medical background, and most medical professionals still haven't worked it out. No, that's not shocking – it's terrifying.

Three weeks after the WHO directive to lower PCR cycles the London *Daily Mail* ran this headline: 'Why ARE Covid cases plummeting? New infections have fallen 45% in the US and 30% globally in the past 3 weeks but experts say vaccine is NOT the main driver because only 8% of Americans and 13% of people worldwide have received their first dose.' They acknowledged that the drop could not be attributed to the 'vaccine', but soon this morphed throughout the media into the 'vaccine' has caused cases and deaths to fall when it was the PCR threshold. In December, 2020, there was

chaos at English Channel ports with truck drivers needing negative 'Covid' tests before they could board a ferry home for Christmas. The government wanted to remove the backlog as fast as possible and they brought in troops to do the 'testing'. Out of 1,600 drivers just 36 tested positive and the rest were given the all clear to cross the Channel. I guess the authorities thought that 36 was the least they could get away with without the unquestioning catching on. The amplification trick which most people believed in the absence of information in the mainstream applied more pressure on those refusing the 'vaccine' to succumb when it 'obviously worked'. The truth was the exact opposite with deaths in care homes soaring with the 'vaccine' and in Israel the term used was 'skyrocket'. A re-analysis of published data from the Israeli Health Ministry led by Dr Hervé Seligmann at the Medicine Emerging Infectious and Tropical Diseases at Aix-Marseille University found that Pfizer's 'Covid vaccine' killed 'about 40 times more [elderly] people than the disease itself would have killed' during a five-week vaccination period and *260 times* more younger people than would have died from the 'virus' even according to the manipulated 'virus' figures. Dr Seligmann and his co-study author, Haim Yativ, declared after reviewing the Israeli 'vaccine' death data: 'This is a new Holocaust.'

Then, in mid-April, 2021, after vast numbers of people worldwide had been 'vaccinated', the story changed with clear coordination. The UK government began to prepare the ground for more future lockdowns when Nuremberg-destined Boris Johnson told yet another whopper. He said that cases had fallen because of *lockdowns* not 'vaccines'. Lockdowns are irrelevant when *there is no 'virus'* and the test and fraudulent death certificates are deciding the number of 'cases' and 'deaths'. Study after study has shown that lockdowns don't work and instead kill and psychologically destroy people. Meanwhile in the United States Anthony Fauci and Rochelle Walensky, the ultra-Zionist head of the CDC, peddled the same line. More lockdown was the answer and not the 'vaccine', a line repeated on cue by the moron that is Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Why all the hysteria to get everyone 'vaccinated' if lockdowns and

not 'vaccines' made the difference? None of it makes sense on the face of it. Oh, but it does. The Cult wants lockdowns *and* the 'vaccine' and if the 'vaccine' is allowed to be seen as the total answer lockdowns would no longer be justified when there are still livelihoods to destroy. 'Variants' and renewed upward manipulation of PCR amplification are planned to instigate never-ending lockdown *and* more 'vaccines'.

You *must* have it – we're desperate

Israel, where the Jewish and Arab population are ruled by the Sabbatian Cult, was the front-runner in imposing the DNA-manipulating 'vaccine' on its people to such an extent that Jewish refusers began to liken what was happening to the early years of Nazi Germany. This would seem to be a fantastic claim. Why would a government of Jewish people be acting like the Nazis did? If you realise that the Sabbatian Cult was behind the Nazis and that Sabbatians hate Jews the pieces start to fit and the question of why a 'Jewish' government would treat Jews with such callous disregard for their lives and freedom finds an answer. Those controlling the government of Israel *aren't Jewish* – they're Sabbatian. Israeli lawyer Tamir Turgal was one who made the Nazi comparison in comments to German lawyer Reiner Fuellmich who is leading a class action lawsuit against the psychopaths for crimes against humanity. Turgal described how the Israeli government was vaccinating children and pregnant women on the basis that there was no evidence that this was dangerous when they had no evidence that it *wasn't* dangerous either. They just had no evidence. This was medical experimentation and Turgal said this breached the Nuremberg Code about medical experimentation and procedures requiring informed consent and choice. Think about that. A Nuremberg Code developed because of Nazi experimentation on Jews and others in concentration camps by people like the evil-beyond-belief Josef Mengele is being breached by the *Israeli* government; but when you know that it's a *Sabbatian* government along with its intelligence and military agencies like Mossad, Shin Bet and the Israeli Defense Forces, and that Sabbatians

were the force behind the Nazis, the kaleidoscope comes into focus. What have we come to when Israeli Jews are suing their government for violating the Nuremberg Code by essentially making Israelis subject to a medical experiment using the controversial 'vaccines'? It's a shocker that this has to be done in the light of what happened in Nazi Germany. The Anshe Ha-Emet, or 'People of the Truth', made up of Israeli doctors, lawyers, campaigners and public, have launched a lawsuit with the International Criminal Court. It says:

When the heads of the Ministry of Health as well as the prime minister presented the vaccine in Israel and began the vaccination of Israeli residents, the vaccinated were not advised, that, in practice, they are taking part in a medical experiment and that their consent is required for this under the Nuremberg Code.

The irony is unbelievable, but easily explained in one word: Sabbatians. The foundation of Israeli 'Covid' apartheid is the 'green pass' or 'green passport' which allows Jews and Arabs who have had the DNA-manipulating 'vaccine' to go about their lives – to work, fly, travel in general, go to shopping malls, bars, restaurants, hotels, concerts, gyms, swimming pools, theatres and sports venues, while non-'vaccinated' are banned from all those places and activities. Israelis have likened the 'green pass' to the yellow stars that Jews in Nazi Germany were forced to wear – the same as the yellow stickers that a branch of UK supermarket chain Morrisons told exempt mask-wearers they had to display when shopping. How very sensitive. The Israeli system is blatant South African-style apartheid on the basis of compliance or non-compliance to fascism rather than colour of the skin. How appropriate that the Sabbatian Israeli government was so close to the pre-Mandela apartheid regime in Pretoria. The Sabbatian-instigated 'vaccine passport' in Israel is planned for everywhere. Sabbatians struck a deal with Pfizer that allowed them to lead the way in the percentage of a national population infused with synthetic material and the result was catastrophic. Israeli freedom activist Shai Dannon told me how chairs were appearing on beaches that said 'vaccinated only'. Health Minister Yuli Edelstein said that anyone unwilling or unable to get

the jabs that 'confer immunity' will be 'left behind'. The man's a liar. Not even the makers claim the 'vaccines' confer immunity. When you see those figures of 'vaccine' deaths these psychopaths were saying that you must take the chance the 'vaccine' will kill you or maim you while knowing it will change your DNA or lockdown for you will be permanent. That's fascism. The Israeli parliament passed a law to allow personal information of the non-vaccinated to be shared with local and national authorities for three months. This was claimed by its supporters to be a way to 'encourage' people to be vaccinated. Hadas Ziv from Physicians for Human Rights described this as a 'draconian law which crushed medical ethics and the patient rights'. But that's the idea, the Sabbatians would reply.

Your papers, please

Sabbatian Israel was leading what has been planned all along to be a global 'vaccine pass' called a 'green passport' without which you would remain in permanent lockdown restriction and unable to do anything. This is how badly – *desperately* – the Cult is to get everyone 'vaccinated'. The term and colour 'green' was not by chance and related to the psychology of fusing the perception of the green climate hoax with the 'Covid' hoax and how the 'solution' to both is the same Great Reset. Lying politicians, health officials and psychologists denied there were any plans for mandatory vaccinations or restrictions based on vaccinations, but they knew that was exactly what was meant to happen with governments of all countries reaching agreements to enforce a global system. 'Free' Denmark and 'free' Sweden unveiled digital vaccine certification. Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain have all committed to a vaccine passport system and the rest including the whole of the EU would follow. The satanic UK government will certainly go this way despite mendacious denials and at the time of writing it is trying to manipulate the public into having the 'vaccine' so they could go abroad on a summer holiday. How would that work without something to prove you had the synthetic toxicity injected into you?

Documents show that the EU's European Commission was moving towards 'vaccine certificates' in 2018 and 2019 before the 'Covid' hoax began. They knew what was coming. Abracadabra – Ursula von der Leyen, the German President of the Commission, announced in March, 2021, an EU 'Digital Green Certificate' – green again – to track the public's 'Covid status'. The passport sting is worldwide and the Far East followed the same pattern with South Korea ruling that only those with 'vaccination' passports – again the *green* pass – would be able to 'return to their daily lives'.

Bill Gates has been preparing for this 'passport' with other Cult operatives for years and beyond the paper version is a Gates-funded 'digital tattoo' to identify who has been vaccinated and who hasn't. The 'tattoo' is reported to include a substance which is externally readable to confirm who has been vaccinated. This is a bio-luminous light-generating enzyme (think fireflies) called ... *Luciferase*. Yes, named after the Cult 'god' Lucifer the 'light bringer' of whom more to come. Gates said he funded the readable tattoo to ensure children in the developing world were vaccinated and no one was missed out. He cares so much about poor kids as we know. This was just the cover story to develop a vaccine tagging system for everyone on the planet. Gates has been funding the ID2020 'alliance' to do just that in league with other lovely people at Microsoft, GAVI, the Rockefeller Foundation, Accenture and IDEO.org. He said in interviews in March, 2020, before any 'vaccine' publicly existed, that the world must have a globalised digital certificate to track the 'virus' and who had been vaccinated. Gates knew from the start that the mRNA vaccines were coming and when they would come and that the plan was to tag the 'vaccinated' to marginalise the intelligent and stop them doing anything including travel. Evil just doesn't suffice. Gates was exposed for offering a \$10 million bribe to the Nigerian House of Representatives to invoke compulsory 'Covid' vaccination of all Nigerians. Sara Cunial, a member of the Italian Parliament, called Gates a 'vaccine criminal'. She urged the Italian President to hand him over to the International Criminal Court for crimes against

humanity and condemned his plans to 'chip the human race' through ID2020.

You know it's a long-planned agenda when war criminal and Cult gofer Tony Blair is on the case. With the scale of arrogance only someone as dark as Blair can muster he said: 'Vaccination in the end is going to be your route to liberty.' Blair is a disgusting piece of work and he confirms that again. The media has given a lot of coverage to a bloke called Charlie Mullins, founder of London's biggest independent plumbing company, Pimlico Plumbers, who has said he won't employ anyone who has not been vaccinated or have them go to any home where people are not vaccinated. He said that if he had his way no one would be allowed to walk the streets if they have not been vaccinated. Gates was cheering at the time while I was alerting the white coats. The plan is that people will qualify for 'passports' for having the first two doses and then to keep it they will have to have all the follow ups and new ones for invented 'variants' until human genetics is transformed and many are dead who can't adjust to the changes. Hollywood celebrities – the usual propaganda stunt – are promoting something called the WELL Health-Safety Rating to verify that a building or space has 'taken the necessary steps to prioritize the health and safety of their staff, visitors and other stakeholders'. They included Lady Gaga, Jennifer Lopez, Michael B. Jordan, Robert DeNiro, Venus Williams, Wolfgang Puck, Deepak Chopra and 17th Surgeon General Richard Carmona. Yawn. WELL Health-Safety has big connections with China. Parent company Delos is headed by former Goldman Sachs partner Paul Scialla. This is another example – and we will see so many others – of using the excuse of 'health' to dictate the lives and activities of the population. I guess one confirmation of the 'safety' of buildings is that only 'vaccinated' people can go in, right?

Electronic concentration camps

I wrote decades ago about the plans to restrict travel and here we are for those who refuse to bow to tyranny. This can be achieved in one go with air travel if the aviation industry makes a blanket decree.

The 'vaccine' and guaranteed income are designed to be part of a global version of China's social credit system which tracks behaviour 24/7 and awards or deletes 'credits' based on whether your behaviour is supported by the state or not. I mean your entire lifestyle – what you do, eat, say, everything. Once your credit score falls below a certain level consequences kick in. In China tens of millions have been denied travel by air and train because of this. All the locations and activities denied to refusers by the 'vaccine' passports will be included in one big mass ban on doing almost anything for those that don't bow their head to government. It's beyond fascist and a new term is required to describe its extremes – I guess fascist technocracy will have to do. The way the Chinese system of technological – technocratic – control is sweeping the West can be seen in the Los Angeles school system and is planned to be expanded worldwide. Every child is required to have a 'Covid'-tracking app scanned daily before they can enter the classroom. The so-called Daily Pass tracking system is produced by Gates' Microsoft which I'm sure will shock you rigid. The pass will be scanned using a barcode (one step from an inside-the-body barcode) and the information will include health checks, 'Covid' tests and vaccinations. Entry codes are for one specific building only and access will only be allowed if a student or teacher has a negative test with a test not testing for the 'virus', has no symptoms of anything alleged to be related to 'Covid' (symptoms from a range of other illness), and has a temperature under 100 degrees. No barcode, no entry, is planned to be the case for everywhere and not only schools.

Kids are being psychologically prepared to accept this as 'normal' their whole life which is why what they can impose in schools is so important to the Cult and its gofers. Long-time American freedom campaigner John Whitehead of the Rutherford Institute was not exaggerating when he said: 'Databit by databit, we are building our own electronic concentration camps.' Canada under its Cult gofer prime minister Justin Trudeau has taken a major step towards the real thing with people interned against their will if they test positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' when they arrive at a Canadian

airport. They are jailed in internment hotels often without food or water for long periods and with many doors failing to lock there have been sexual assaults. The interned are being charged sometimes \$2,000 for the privilege of being abused in this way. Trudeau is fully on board with the Cult and says the 'Covid pandemic' has provided an opportunity for a global 'reset' to permanently change Western civilisation. His number two, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, is a trustee of the World Economic Forum and a Rhodes Scholar. The Trudeau family have long been servants of the Cult. See *The Biggest Secret* and Cathy O'Brien's book *Trance-Formation of America* for the horrific background to Trudeau's father Pierre Trudeau another Canadian prime minister. Hide your fascism behind the façade of a heart-on-the-sleeve liberal. It's a well-honed Cult technique.

What can the 'vaccine' really do?

We have a 'virus' never shown to exist and 'variants' of the 'virus' that have also never been shown to exist except, like the 'original', as computer-generated fictions. Even if you believe there's a 'virus' the 'case' to 'death' rate is in the region of 0.23 to 0.15 percent and those 'deaths' are concentrated among the very old around the same average age that people die anyway. In response to this lack of threat (in truth none) psychopaths and idiots, knowingly and unknowingly answering to Gates and the Cult, are seeking to 'vaccinate' every man, woman and child on Planet Earth. Clearly the 'vaccine' is not about 'Covid' – none of this ever has been. So what is it all about *really*? Why the desperation to infuse genetically-manipulating synthetic material into everyone through mRNA fraudulent 'vaccines' with the intent of doing this over and over with the excuses of 'variants' and other 'virus' inventions? Dr Sherri Tenpenny, an osteopathic medical doctor in the United States, has made herself an expert on vaccines and their effects as a vehement campaigner against their use. Tenpenny was board certified in emergency medicine, the director of a level two trauma centre for 12 years, and moved to Cleveland in 1996 to start an integrative

medicine practice which has treated patients from all 50 states and some 17 other countries. Weaning people off pharmaceutical drugs is a speciality.

She became interested in the consequences of vaccines after attending a meeting at the National Vaccine Information Center in Washington DC in 2000 where she 'sat through four days of listening to medical doctors and scientists and lawyers and parents of vaccine injured kids' and asked: 'What's going on?' She had never been vaccinated and never got ill while her father was given a list of vaccines to be in the military and was 'sick his entire life'. The experience added to her questions and she began to examine vaccine documents from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). After reading the first one, the 1998 version of *The General Recommendations of Vaccination*, she thought: 'This is it?' The document was poorly written and bad science and Tenpenny began 20 years of research into vaccines that continues to this day. She began her research into 'Covid vaccines' in March, 2020, and she describes them as 'deadly'. For many, as we have seen, they already have been. Tenpenny said that in the first 30 days of the 'vaccine' rollout in the United States there had been more than 40,000 adverse events reported to the vaccine adverse event database. A document had been delivered to her the day before that was 172 pages long. 'We have over 40,000 adverse events; we have over 3,100 cases of [potentially deadly] anaphylactic shock; we have over 5,000 neurological reactions.' Effects ranged from headaches to numbness, dizziness and vertigo, to losing feeling in hands or feet and paraesthesia which is when limbs 'fall asleep' and people have the sensation of insects crawling underneath their skin. All this happened in the first 30 days and remember that only about *ten percent* (or far less) of adverse reactions and vaccine-related deaths are estimated to be officially reported. Tenpenny said:

So can you think of one single product in any industry, any industry, for as long as products have been made on the planet that within 30 days we have 40,000 people complaining of side effects that not only is still on the market but ... we've got paid actors telling us how great

they are for getting their vaccine. We're offering people \$500 if they will just get their vaccine and we've got nurses and doctors going; 'I got the vaccine, I got the vaccine'.

Tenpenny said they were not going to be 'happy dancing folks' when they began to suffer Bell's palsy (facial paralysis), neuropathies, cardiac arrhythmias and autoimmune reactions that kill through a blood disorder. 'They're not going to be so happy, happy then, but we're never going to see pictures of those people' she said. Tenpenny described the 'vaccine' as 'a well-designed killing tool'.

No off-switch

Bad as the initial consequences had been Tenpenny said it would be maybe 14 months before we began to see the 'full ravage' of what is going to happen to the 'Covid vaccinated' with full-out consequences taking anything between two years and 20 years to show. You can understand why when you consider that variations of the 'Covid vaccine' use mRNA (messenger RNA) to in theory activate the immune system to produce protective antibodies without using the actual 'virus'. How can they when it's a computer program and they've never isolated what they claim is the 'real thing'? Instead they use *synthetic* mRNA. They are inoculating synthetic material into the body which through a technique known as the Trojan horse is absorbed into cells to change the nature of DNA. Human DNA is changed by an infusion of messenger RNA and with each new 'vaccine' of this type it is changed even more. Say so and you are banned by Cult Internet platforms. The contempt the contemptuous Mark Zuckerberg has for the truth and human health can be seen in an internal Facebook video leaked to the Project Veritas investigative team in which he said of the 'Covid vaccines': '... I share some caution on this because we just don't know the long term side-effects of basically modifying people's DNA and RNA.' At the same time this disgusting man's Facebook was censoring and banning anyone saying exactly the same. He must go before a Nuremberg trial for crimes against humanity when he *knows* that he

is censoring legitimate concerns and denying the right of informed consent on behalf of the Cult that owns him. People have been killed and damaged by the very 'vaccination' technique he cast doubt on himself when they may not have had the 'vaccine' with access to information that he denied them. The plan is to have at least annual 'Covid vaccinations', add others to deal with invented 'variants', and change all other vaccines into the mRNA system. Pfizer executives told shareholders at a virtual Barclays Global Healthcare Conference in March, 2021, that the public may need a third dose of 'Covid vaccine', plus regular yearly boosters and the company planned to hike prices to milk the profits in a 'significant opportunity for our vaccine'. These are the professional liars, cheats and opportunists who are telling you their 'vaccine' is safe. Given this volume of mRNA planned to be infused into the human body and its ability to then replicate we will have a transformation of human genetics from biological to synthetic biological – exactly the long-time Cult plan for reasons we'll see – and many will die. Sherri Tenpenny said of this replication:

It's like having an on-button but no off-button and that whole mechanism ... they actually give it a name and they call it the Trojan horse mechanism, because it allows that [synthetic] virus and that piece of that [synthetic] virus to get inside of your cells, start to replicate and even get inserted into other parts of your DNA as a Trojan-horse.

Ask the overwhelming majority of people who have the 'vaccine' what they know about the contents and what they do and they would reply: 'The government says it will stop me getting the virus.' Governments give that false impression on purpose to increase take-up. You can read Sherri Tenpenny's detailed analysis of the health consequences in her blog at [Vaxxter.com](https://vaxxter.com), but in summary these are some of them. She highlights the statement by Bill Gates about how human beings can become their own 'vaccine manufacturing machine'. The man is insane. ['Vaccine'-generated] 'antibodies' carry synthetic messenger RNA into the cells and the damage starts, Tenpenny contends, and she says that lungs can be adversely affected through varying degrees of pus and bleeding which

obviously affects breathing and would be dubbed 'Covid-19'. Even more sinister was the impact of 'antibodies' on macrophages, a white blood cell of the immune system. They consist of Type 1 and Type 2 which have very different functions. She said Type 1 are 'hyper-vigilant' white blood cells which 'gobble up' bacteria etc. However, in doing so, this could cause inflammation and in extreme circumstances be fatal. She says these affects are mitigated by Type 2 macrophages which kick in to calm down the system and stop it going rogue. They clear up dead tissue debris and reduce inflammation that the Type 1 'fire crews' have caused. Type 1 kills the infection and Type 2 heals the damage, she says. This is her punchline with regard to 'Covid vaccinations': She says that mRNA 'antibodies' block Type 2 macrophages by attaching to them and deactivating them. This meant that when the Type 1 response was triggered by infection there was nothing to stop that getting out of hand by calming everything down. There's an on-switch, but no off-switch, she says. What follows can be 'over and out, see you when I see you'.

Genetic suicide

Tenpenny also highlights the potential for autoimmune disease – the body attacking itself – which has been associated with vaccines since they first appeared. Infusing a synthetic foreign substance into cells could cause the immune system to react in a panic believing that the body is being overwhelmed by an invader (it is) and the consequences can again be fatal. There is an autoimmune response known as a 'cytokine storm' which I have likened to a homeowner panicked by an intruder and picking up a gun to shoot randomly in all directions before turning the fire on himself. The immune system unleashes a storm of inflammatory response called cytokines to a threat and the body commits hara-kiri. The lesson is that you mess with the body's immune response at your peril and these 'vaccines' seriously – fundamentally – mess with immune response. Tenpenny refers to a consequence called anaphylactic shock which is a severe and highly dangerous allergic reaction when the immune system

floods the body with chemicals. She gives the example of having a bee sting which primes the immune system and makes it sensitive to those chemicals. When people are stung again maybe years later the immune response can be so powerful that it leads to anaphylactic shock. Tenpenny relates this 'shock' with regard to the 'Covid vaccine' to something called polyethylene glycol or PEG. Enormous numbers of people have become sensitive to this over decades of use in a whole range of products and processes including food, drink, skin creams and 'medicine'. Studies have claimed that some 72 percent of people have antibodies triggered by PEG compared with two percent in the 1960s and allergic hypersensitive reactions to this become a gathering cause for concern. Tenpenny points out that the 'mRNA vaccine' is coated in a 'bubble' of polyethylene glycol which has the potential to cause anaphylactic shock through immune sensitivity. Many reports have appeared of people reacting this way after having the 'Covid vaccine'. What do we think is going to happen as humanity has more and more of these 'vaccines'?

Tenpenny said: 'All these pictures we have seen with people with these rashes ... these weepy rashes, big reactions on their arms and things like that – it's an acute allergic reaction most likely to the polyethylene glycol that you've been previously primed and sensitised to.'

Those who have not studied the conspiracy and its perpetrators at length might think that making the population sensitive to PEG and then putting it in these 'vaccines' is just a coincidence. It is not. It is instead testament to how carefully and coldly-planned current events have been and the scale of the conspiracy we are dealing with. Tenpenny further explains that the 'vaccine' mRNA procedure can breach the blood-brain barrier which protects the brain from toxins and other crap that will cause malfunction. In this case they could make two proteins corrupt brain function to cause Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a progressive nervous system disease leading to loss of muscle control, and frontal lobe degeneration – Alzheimer's and dementia. Immunologist J. Bart Classon published a paper connecting mRNA 'vaccines' to prion

disease which can lead to Alzheimer's and other forms of neurodegenerative disease while others have pointed out the potential to affect the placenta in ways that make women infertile. This will become highly significant in the next chapter when I will discuss other aspects of this non-vaccine that relate to its nanotechnology and transmission from the injected to the uninjected.

Qualified in idiocy

Tenpenny describes how research has confirmed that these 'vaccine'-generated antibodies can interact with a range of other tissues in the body and attack many other organs including the lungs. 'This means that if you have a hundred people standing in front of you that all got this shot they could have a hundred different symptoms.' Anyone really think that Cult gofers like the Queen, Tony Blair, Christopher Whitty, Anthony Fauci, and all the other psychopaths have really had this 'vaccine' in the pictures we've seen? Not a bloody chance. Why don't doctors all tell us about all these dangers and consequences of the 'Covid vaccine'? Why instead do they encourage and pressure patients to have the shot? Don't let's think for a moment that doctors and medical staff can't be stupid, lazy, and psychopathic and that's without the financial incentives to give the jab. Tenpenny again:

Some people are going to die from the vaccine directly but a large number of people are going to start to get horribly sick and get all kinds of autoimmune diseases 42 days to maybe a year out. What are they going to do, these stupid doctors who say; 'Good for you for getting that vaccine.' What are they going to say; 'Oh, it must be a mutant, we need to give an extra dose of that vaccine.'

Because now the vaccine, instead of one dose or two doses we need three or four because the stupid physicians aren't taking the time to learn anything about it. If I can learn this sitting in my living room reading a 19 page paper and several others so can they. There's nothing special about me, I just take the time to do it.

Remember how Sara Kayat, the NHS and TV doctor, said that the 'Covid vaccine' would '100 percent prevent hospitalisation and death'. Doctors can be idiots like every other profession and they

should not be worshipped as infallible. They are not and far from it. Behind many medical and scientific 'experts' lies an uninformed prat trying to hide themselves from you although in the 'Covid' era many have failed to do so as with UK narrative-repeating 'TV doctor' Hilary Jones. Pushing back against the minority of proper doctors and scientists speaking out against the 'vaccine' has been the entire edifice of the Cult global state in the form of governments, medical systems, corporations, mainstream media, Silicon Valley, and an army of compliant doctors, medical staff and scientists willing to say anything for money and to enhance their careers by promoting the party line. If you do that you are an 'expert' and if you won't you are an 'anti-vaxxer' and 'Covidiot'. The pressure to be 'vaccinated' is incessant. We have even had reports claiming that the 'vaccine' can help cure cancer and Alzheimer's and make the lame walk. I am waiting for the announcement that it can bring you coffee in the morning and cook your tea. Just as the symptoms of 'Covid' seem to increase by the week so have the miracles of the 'vaccine'. American supermarket giant Kroger Co. offered nearly 500,000 employees in 35 states a \$100 bonus for having the 'vaccine' while donut chain Krispy Kreme promised 'vaccinated' customers a free glazed donut every day for the rest of 2021. Have your DNA changed and you will get a doughnut although we might not have to give you them for long. Such offers and incentives confirm the desperation.

Perhaps the worse vaccine-stunt of them all was UK 'Health' Secretary Matt-the-prat Hancock on live TV after watching a clip of someone being 'vaccinated' when the roll-out began. Hancock faked tears so badly it was embarrassing. Brain-of-Britain Piers Morgan, the lockdown-supporting, 'vaccine' supporting, 'vaccine' passport-supporting, TV host played along with Hancock – 'You're quite emotional about that' he said in response to acting so atrocious it would have been called out at a school nativity which will presumably today include Mary and Jesus in masks, wise men keeping their camels six feet apart, and shepherds under tent arrest. System-serving Morgan tweeted this: 'Love the idea of covid vaccine passports for everywhere: flights, restaurants, clubs, football, gyms,

shops etc. It's time covid-denying, anti-vaxxer loonies had their bullsh*t bluff called & bar themselves from going anywhere that responsible citizens go.' If only I could aspire to his genius. To think that Morgan, who specialises in shouting over anyone he disagrees with, was lauded as a free speech hero when he lost his job after storming off the set of his live show like a child throwing his dolly out of the pram. If he is a free speech hero we are in real trouble. I have no idea what 'bullsh*t' means, by the way, the * throws me completely.

The Cult is desperate to infuse its synthetic DNA-changing concoction into everyone and has been using every lie, trick and intimidation to do so. The question of '*Why?*' we shall now address.

CHAPTER TEN

Human 2.0

I believe that at the end of the century the use of words and general educated opinion will have altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted –
Alan Turing (1912-1954), the ‘Father of artificial intelligence’

I have been exposing for decades the plan to transform the human body from a biological to a synthetic-biological state. The new human that I will call Human 2.0 is planned to be connected to artificial intelligence and a global AI ‘Smart Grid’ that would operate as one global system in which AI would control everything from your fridge to your heating system to your car to your mind. Humans would no longer be ‘human’, but post-human and sub-human, with their thinking and emotional processes replaced by AI.

What I said sounded crazy and beyond science fiction and I could understand that. To any balanced, rational, mind it *is* crazy. Today, however, that world is becoming reality and it puts the ‘Covid vaccine’ into its true context. Ray Kurzweil is the ultra-Zionist ‘computer scientist, inventor and futurist’ and co-founder of the Singularity University. Singularity refers to the merging of humans with machines or ‘transhumanism’. Kurzweil has said humanity would be connected to the cyber ‘cloud’ in the period of the ever-recurring year of 2030:

Our thinking ... will be a hybrid of biological and non-biological thinking ... humans will be able to extend their limitations and ‘think in the cloud’ ... We’re going to put gateways to the

cloud in our brains ... We're going to gradually merge and enhance ourselves ... In my view, that's the nature of being human – we transcend our limitations. As the technology becomes vastly superior to what we are then the small proportion that is still human gets smaller and smaller and smaller until it's just utterly negligible.

They are trying to sell this end-of-humanity-as-we-know-it as the next stage of 'evolution' when we become super-human and 'like the gods'. They are lying to you. Shocked, eh? The population, and again especially the young, have been manipulated into addiction to technologies designed to enslave them for life. First they induced an addiction to smartphones (holdables); next they moved to technology on the body (wearables); and then began the invasion of the body (implantables). I warned way back about the plan for microchipped people and we are now entering that era. We should not be diverted into thinking that this refers only to chips we can see. Most important are the nanochips known as smart dust, neural dust and nanobots which are far too small to be seen by the human eye. Nanotechnology is everywhere, increasingly in food products, and released into the atmosphere by the geoengineering of the skies funded by Bill Gates to 'shut out the Sun' and 'save the planet from global warming'. Gates has been funding a project to spray millions of tonnes of chalk (calcium carbonate) into the stratosphere over Sweden to 'dim the Sun' and cool the Earth. Scientists warned the move could be disastrous for weather systems in ways no one can predict and opposition led to the Swedish space agency announcing that the 'experiment' would not be happening as planned in the summer of 2021; but it shows where the Cult is going with dimming the impact of the Sun and there's an associated plan to change the planet's atmosphere. Who gives psychopath Gates the right to dictate to the entire human race and dismantle planetary systems? The world will not be safe while this man is at large.

The global warming hoax has made the Sun, like the gas of life, something to fear when both are essential to good health and human survival (more inversion). The body transforms sunlight into vital vitamin D through a process involving ... *cholesterol*. This is the cholesterol we are also told to fear. We are urged to take Big Pharma

statin drugs to reduce cholesterol and it's all systematic. Reducing cholesterol means reducing vitamin D uptake with all the multiple health problems that will cause. At least if you take statins long term it saves the government from having to pay you a pension. The delivery system to block sunlight is widely referred to as chemtrails although these have a much deeper agenda, too. They appear at first to be contrails or condensation trails streaming from aircraft into cold air at high altitudes. Contrails disperse very quickly while chemtrails do not and spread out across the sky before eventually their content falls to earth. Many times I have watched aircraft cross-cross a clear blue sky releasing chemtrails until it looks like a cloudy day. Chemtrails contain many things harmful to humans and the natural world including toxic heavy metals, aluminium (see Alzheimer's) and nanotechnology. Ray Kurzweil reveals the reason without actually saying so: 'Nanobots will infuse all the matter around us with information. Rocks, trees, everything will become these intelligent creatures.' How do you deliver that? *From the sky*. Self-replicating nanobots would connect everything to the Smart Grid. The phenomenon of Morgellons disease began in the chemtrail era and the correlation has led to it being dubbed the 'chemtrail disease'. Self-replicating fibres appear in the body that can be pulled out through the skin. Morgellons fibres continue to grow outside the body and have a form of artificial intelligence. I cover this at greater length in *Phantom Self*.

'Vaccine' operating system

'Covid vaccines' with their self-replicating synthetic material are also designed to make the connection between humanity and Kurzweil's 'cloud'. American doctor and dedicated campaigner for truth, Carrie Madej, an Internal Medicine Specialist in Georgia with more than 20 years medical experience, has highlighted the nanotechnology aspect of the fake 'vaccines'. She explains how one of the components in at least the Moderna and Pfizer synthetic potions are 'lipid nanoparticles' which are 'like little tiny computer bits' – a 'sci-fi substance' known as nanobots and hydrogel which can be 'triggered

at any moment to deliver its payload' and act as 'biosensors'. The synthetic substance had 'the ability to accumulate data from your body like your breathing, your respiration, thoughts and emotions, all kind of things' and each syringe could carry a *million* nanobots:

This substance because it's like little bits of computers in your body, crazy, but it's true, it can do that, [and] obviously has the ability to act through Wi-Fi. It can receive and transmit energy, messages, frequencies or impulses. That issue has never been addressed by these companies. What does that do to the human?

Just imagine getting this substance in you and it can react to things all around you, the 5G, your smart device, your phones, what is happening with that? What if something is triggering it, too, like an impulse, a frequency? We have something completely foreign in the human body.

Madej said her research revealed that electromagnetic (EMF) frequencies emitted by phones and other devices had increased dramatically in the same period of the 'vaccine' rollout and she was seeing more people with radiation problems as 5G and other electromagnetic technology was expanded and introduced to schools and hospitals. She said she was 'floored with the EMF coming off' the devices she checked. All this makes total sense and syncs with my own work of decades when you think that Moderna refers in documents to its mRNA 'vaccine' as an 'operating system':

Recognizing the broad potential of mRNA science, we set out to create an mRNA technology platform that functions very much like an operating system on a computer. It is designed so that it can plug and play interchangeably with different programs. In our case, the 'program' or 'app' is our mRNA drug – the unique mRNA sequence that codes for a protein ...

... Our MRNA Medicines – 'The 'Software Of Life': When we have a concept for a new mRNA medicine and begin research, fundamental components are already in place. Generally, the only thing that changes from one potential mRNA medicine to another is the coding region – the actual genetic code that instructs ribosomes to make protein. Utilizing these instruction sets gives our investigational mRNA medicines a software-like quality. We also have the ability to combine different mRNA sequences encoding for different proteins in a single mRNA investigational medicine.

Who needs a real ‘virus’ when you can create a computer version to justify infusing your operating system into the entire human race on the road to making living, breathing people into cyborgs? What is missed with the ‘vaccines’ is the *digital* connection between synthetic material and the body that I highlighted earlier with the study that hacked a computer with human DNA. On one level the body is digital, based on mathematical codes, and I’ll have more about that in the next chapter. Those who ridiculously claim that mRNA ‘vaccines’ are not designed to change human genetics should explain the words of Dr Tal Zaks, chief medical officer at Moderna, in a 2017 TED talk. He said that over the last 30 years ‘we’ve been living this phenomenal digital scientific revolution, and I’m here today to tell you, that we are actually *hacking the software of life*, and that it’s changing the way we think about prevention and treatment of disease’:

In every cell there’s this thing called messenger RNA, or mRNA for short, that transmits the critical information from the DNA in our genes to the protein, which is really the stuff we’re all made out of. This is the critical information that determines what the cell will do. So we think about it as an operating system. So if you could change that, if you could introduce a line of code, or change a line of code, it turns out, that has profound implications for everything, from the flu to cancer.

Zaks should more accurately have said that this has profound implications for the human genetic code and the nature of DNA. Communications within the body go both ways and not only one. But, hey, no, the ‘Covid vaccine’ will not affect your genetics. Cult fact-checkers say so even though the man who helped to develop the mRNA technique says that it does. Zaks said in 2017:

If you think about what it is we’re trying to do. We’ve taken information and our understanding of that information and how that information is transmitted in a cell, and we’ve taken our understanding of medicine and how to make drugs, and we’re fusing the two. We think of it as information therapy.

I have been writing for decades that the body is an information field communicating with itself and the wider world. This is why

radiation which is information can change the information field of body and mind through phenomena like 5G and change their nature and function. 'Information therapy' means to change the body's information field and change the way it operates. DNA is a receiver-transmitter of information and can be mutated by information like mRNA synthetic messaging. Technology to do this has been ready and waiting in the underground bases and other secret projects to be rolled out when the 'Covid' hoax was played. 'Trials' of such short and irrelevant duration were only for public consumption. When they say the 'vaccine' is 'experimental' that is not true. It may appear to be 'experimental' to those who don't know what's going on, but the trials have already been done to ensure the Cult gets the result it desires. Zaks said that it took decades to sequence the human genome, completed in 2003, but now they could do it in a week. By 'they' he means scientists operating in the public domain. In the secret projects they were sequencing the genome in a week long before even 2003.

Deluge of mRNA

Highly significantly the Moderna document says the guiding premise is that if using mRNA as a medicine works for one disease then it should work for many diseases. They were leveraging the flexibility afforded by their platform and the fundamental role mRNA plays in protein synthesis to pursue mRNA medicines for a broad spectrum of diseases. Moderna is confirming what I was saying through 2020 that multiple 'vaccines' were planned for 'Covid' (and later invented 'variants') and that previous vaccines would be converted to the mRNA system to infuse the body with massive amounts of genetically-manipulating synthetic material to secure a transformation to a synthetic-biological state. The 'vaccines' are designed to kill stunning numbers as part of the long-exposed Cult depopulation agenda and transform the rest. Given this is the goal you can appreciate why there is such hysterical demand for every human to be 'vaccinated' for an alleged 'disease' that has an estimated 'infection' to 'death' ratio of 0.23-0.15 percent. As I write

children are being given the 'vaccine' in trials (their parents are a disgrace) and ever-younger people are being offered the vaccine for a 'virus' that even if you believe it exists has virtually zero chance of harming them. Horrific effects of the 'trials' on a 12-year-old girl were revealed by a family member to be serious brain and gastric problems that included a bowel obstruction and the inability to swallow liquids or solids. She was unable to eat or drink without throwing up, had extreme pain in her back, neck and abdomen, and was paralysed from the waist down which stopped her urinating unaided. When the girl was first taken to hospital doctors said it was all in her mind. She was signed up for the 'trial' by her parents for whom no words suffice. None of this 'Covid vaccine' insanity makes any sense unless you see what the 'vaccine' really is – a body-changer. Synthetic biology or 'SynBio' is a fast-emerging and expanding scientific discipline which includes everything from genetic and molecular engineering to electrical and computer engineering. Synthetic biology is defined in these ways:

- A multidisciplinary area of research that seeks to create new biological parts, devices, and systems, or to redesign systems that are already found in nature.
- The use of a mixture of physical engineering and genetic engineering to create new (and therefore synthetic) life forms.
- An emerging field of research that aims to combine the knowledge and methods of biology, engineering and related disciplines in the design of chemically-synthesized DNA to create organisms with novel or enhanced characteristics and traits (synthetic organisms including humans).

We now have synthetic blood, skin, organs and limbs being developed along with synthetic body parts produced by 3D printers. These are all elements of the synthetic human programme and this comment by Kurzweil's co-founder of the Singularity University,

Peter Diamandis, can be seen in a whole new light with the 'Covid' hoax and the sanctions against those that refuse the 'vaccine':

Anybody who is going to be resisting the progress forward [to transhumanism] is going to be resisting evolution and, fundamentally, they will die out. It's not a matter of whether it's good or bad. It's going to happen.

'Resisting evolution'? What absolute bollocks. The arrogance of these people is without limit. His 'it's going to happen' mantra is another way of saying 'resistance is futile' to break the spirit of those pushing back and we must not fall for it. Getting this genetically-transforming 'vaccine' into everyone is crucial to the Cult plan for total control and the desperation to achieve that is clear for anyone to see. Vaccine passports are a major factor in this and they, too, are a form of resistance is futile. It's NOT. The paper funded by the Rockefeller Foundation for the 2013 'health conference' in China said:

We will interact more with artificial intelligence. The use of robotics, bio-engineering to augment human functioning is already well underway and will advance. Re-engineering of humans into potentially separate and unequal forms through genetic engineering or mixed human-robots raises debates on ethics and equality.

A new demography is projected to emerge after 2030 [that year again] of technologies (robotics, genetic engineering, nanotechnology) producing robots, engineered organisms, 'nanobots' and artificial intelligence (AI) that can self-replicate. Debates will grow on the implications of an impending reality of human designed life.

What is happening today is so long planned. The world army enforcing the will of the world government is intended to be a robot army, not a human one. Today's military and its technologically 'enhanced' troops, pilotless planes and driverless vehicles are just stepping stones to that end. Human soldiers are used as Cult fodder and its time they woke up to that and worked for the freedom of the population instead of their own destruction and their family's destruction – the same with the police. Join us and let's sort this out. The phenomenon of enforce my own destruction is widespread in the 'Covid' era with Woker 'luvvies' in the acting and entertainment

industries supporting 'Covid' rules which have destroyed their profession and the same with those among the public who put signs on the doors of their businesses 'closed due to Covid – stay safe' when many will never reopen. It's a form of masochism and most certainly insanity.

Transgender = transhumanism

When something explodes out of nowhere and is suddenly everywhere it is always the Cult agenda and so it is with the tidal wave of claims and demands that have infiltrated every aspect of society under the heading of 'transgenderism'. The term 'trans' is so 'in' and this is the dictionary definition:

A prefix meaning 'across', 'through', occurring ... in loanwords from Latin, used in particular for denoting movement or conveyance from place to place (transfer; transmit; transplant) or complete change (transform; transmute), or to form adjectives meaning 'crossing', 'on the other side of', or 'going beyond' the place named (transmontane; transnational; trans-Siberian).

Transgender means to go beyond gender and transhuman means to go beyond human. Both are aspects of the Cult plan to transform the human body to a synthetic state with *no gender*. Human 2.0 is not designed to procreate and would be produced technologically with no need for parents. The new human would mean the end of parents and so men, and increasingly women, are being targeted for the deletion of their rights and status. Parental rights are disappearing at an ever-quickenning speed for the same reason. The new human would have no need for men or women when there is no procreation and no gender. Perhaps the transgender movement that appears to be in a permanent state of frenzy might now contemplate on how it is being used. This was never about transgender rights which are only the interim excuse for confusing gender, particularly in the young, on the road to *fusing* gender. Transgender activism is not an end; it is a *means* to an end. We see again the technique of creative destruction in which you destroy the status quo to 'build back better' in the form that you want. The gender status quo had to be

destroyed by persuading the Cult-created Woke mentality to believe that you can have 100 genders or more. A programme for 9 to 12 year olds produced by the Cult-owned BBC promoted the 100 genders narrative. The very idea may be the most monumental nonsense, but it is not what is true that counts, only what you can make people *believe* is true. Once the gender of $2 + 2 = 4$ has been dismantled through indoctrination, intimidation and $2 + 2 = 5$ then the new no-gender normal can take its place with Human 2.0.

Aldous Huxley revealed the plan in his prophetic *Brave New World* in 1932:

Natural reproduction has been done away with and children are created, decanted', and raised in 'hatcheries and conditioning centres'. From birth, people are genetically designed to fit into one of five castes, which are further split into 'Plus' and 'Minus' members and designed to fulfil predetermined positions within the social and economic strata of the World State.

How could Huxley know this in 1932? For the same reason George Orwell knew about the Big Brother state in 1948, Cult insiders I have quoted knew about it in 1969, and I have known about it since the early 1990s. If you are connected to the Cult or you work your balls off to uncover the plan you can predict the future. The process is simple. If there is a plan for the world and nothing intervenes to stop it then it will happen. Thus if you communicate the plan ahead of time you are perceived to have predicted the future, but you haven't. You have revealed the plan which without intervention will become the human future. The whole reason I have done what I have is to alert enough people to inspire an intervention and maybe at last that time has come with the Cult and its intentions now so obvious to anyone with a brain in working order.

The future is here

Technological wombs that Huxley described to replace parent procreation are already being developed and they are only the projects we know about in the public arena. Israeli scientists told *The Times of Israel* in March, 2021, that they have grown 250-cell embryos

into mouse fetuses with fully formed organs using artificial wombs in a development they say could pave the way for gestating humans outside the womb. Professor Jacob Hanna of the Weizmann Institute of Science said:

We took mouse embryos from the mother at day five of development, when they are just of 250 cells, and had them in the incubator from day five until day 11, by which point they had grown all their organs.

By day 11 they make their own blood and have a beating heart, a fully developed brain. Anybody would look at them and say, 'this is clearly a mouse foetus with all the characteristics of a mouse.' It's gone from being a ball of cells to being an advanced foetus.

A special liquid is used to nourish embryo cells in a laboratory dish and they float on the liquid to duplicate the first stage of embryonic development. The incubator creates all the right conditions for its development, Hanna said. The liquid gives the embryo 'all the nutrients, hormones and sugars they need' along with a custom-made electronic incubator which controls gas concentration, pressure and temperature. The cutting-edge in the underground bases and other secret locations will be light years ahead of that, however, and this was reported by the London *Guardian* in 2017:

We are approaching a biotechnological breakthrough. Ectogenesis, the invention of a complete external womb, could completely change the nature of human reproduction. In April this year, researchers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia announced their development of an artificial womb.

The article was headed 'Artificial wombs could soon be a reality. What will this mean for women?' What would it mean for children is an even bigger question. No mother to bond with only a machine in preparation for a life of soulless interaction and control in a world governed by machines (see the *Matrix* movies). Now observe the calculated manipulations of the 'Covid' hoax as human interaction and warmth has been curtailed by distancing, isolation and fear with people communicating via machines on a scale never seen before.

These are all dots in the same picture as are all the personal assistants, gadgets and children's toys through which kids and adults communicate with AI as if it is human. The AI 'voice' on Sat-Nav should be included. All these things are psychological preparation for the Cult endgame. Before you can make a physical connection with AI you have to make a psychological connection and that is what people are being conditioned to do with this ever gathering human-AI interaction. Movies and TV programmes depicting the transhuman, robot dystopia relate to a phenomenon known as 'pre-emptive programming' in which the world that is planned is portrayed everywhere in movies, TV and advertising. This is conditioning the conscious and subconscious mind to become familiar with the planned reality to dilute resistance when it happens for real. What would have been a shock such is the change is made less so. We have young children put on the road to transgender transition surgery with puberty blocking drugs at an age when they could never be able to make those life-changing decisions.

Rachel Levine, a professor of paediatrics and psychiatry who believes in treating children this way, became America's highest-ranked openly-transgender official when she was confirmed as US Assistant Secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services after being nominated by Joe Biden (the Cult). Activists and governments press for laws to deny parents a say in their children's transition process so the kids can be isolated and manipulated into agreeing to irreversible medical procedures. A Canadian father Robert Hoogland was denied bail by the Vancouver Supreme Court in 2021 and remained in jail for breaching a court order that he stay silent over his young teenage daughter, a minor, who was being offered life-changing hormone therapy without parental consent. At the age of 12 the girl's 'school counsellor' said she may be transgender, referred her to a doctor and told the school to treat her like a boy. This is another example of state-serving schools imposing ever more control over children's lives while parents have ever less.

Contemptible and extreme child abuse is happening all over the world as the Cult gender-fusion operation goes into warp-speed.

Why the war on men – and now women?

The question about what artificial wombs mean for women should rightly be asked. The answer can be seen in the deletion of women's rights involving sport, changing rooms, toilets and status in favour of people in male bodies claiming to identify as women. I can identify as a mountain climber, but it doesn't mean I can climb a mountain any more than a biological man can be a biological woman. To believe so is a triumph of belief over factual reality which is the very perceptual basis of everything Woke. Women's sport is being destroyed by allowing those with male bodies who say they identify as female to 'compete' with girls and women. Male body 'women' dominate 'women's' competition with their greater muscle mass, bone density, strength and speed. With that disadvantage sport for women loses all meaning. To put this in perspective nearly 300 American high school boys can run faster than the quickest woman sprinter in the world. Women are seeing their previously protected spaces invaded by male bodies simply because they claim to identify as women. That's all they need to do to access all women's spaces and activities under the Biden 'Equality Act' that destroys equality for women with the usual Orwellian Woke inversion. Male sex offenders have already committed rapes in women's prisons after claiming to identify as women to get them transferred. Does this not matter to the Woke 'equality' hypocrites? Not in the least. What matters to Cult manipulators and funders behind transgender activists is to advance gender fusion on the way to the no-gender 'human'. When you are seeking to impose transparent nonsense like this, or the 'Covid' hoax, the only way the nonsense can prevail is through censorship and intimidation of dissenters, deletion of factual information, and programming of the unquestioning, bewildered and naive. You don't have to scan the world for long to see that all these things are happening.

Many women's rights organisations have realised that rights and status which took such a long time to secure are being eroded and that it is systematic. Kara Dansky of the global Women's Human Rights Campaign said that Biden's transgender executive order immediately he took office, subsequent orders, and Equality Act legislation that followed 'seek to erase women and girls in the law as a category'. *Exactly*. I said during the long ago-started war on men (in which many women play a crucial part) that this was going to turn into a war on them. The Cult is phasing out *both* male and female genders. To get away with that they are brought into conflict so they are busy fighting each other while the Cult completes the job with no unity of response. Unity, people, *unity*. We need unity everywhere. Transgender is the only show in town as the big step towards the no-gender human. It's not about rights for transgender people and never has been. Woke political correctness is deleting words relating to genders to the same end. Wokers believe this is to be 'inclusive' when the opposite is true. They are deleting words describing gender because gender *itself* is being deleted by Human 2.0. Terms like 'man', 'woman', 'mother' and 'father' are being deleted in the universities and other institutions to be replaced by the *no*-gender, not trans-gender, 'individuals' and 'guardians'. Women's rights campaigner Maria Keffler of Partners for Ethical Care said: 'Children are being taught from kindergarten upward that some boys have a vagina, some girls have a penis, and that kids can be any gender they want to be.' Do we really believe that suddenly countries all over the world at the same time had the idea of having drag queens go into schools or read transgender stories to very young children in the local library? It's coldly-calculated confusion of gender on the way to the fusion of gender. Suzanne Vierling, a psychologist from Southern California, made another important point:

Yesterday's slave woman who endured gynecological medical experiments is today's girl-child being butchered in a booming gender-transitioning sector. Ovaries removed, pushing her into menopause and osteoporosis, uncharted territory, and parents' rights and authority decimated.

The erosion of parental rights is a common theme in line with the Cult plans to erase the very concept of parents and 'ovaries removed, pushing her into menopause' means what? Those born female lose the ability to have children – another way to discontinue humanity as we know it.

Eliminating Human 1.0 (before our very eyes)

To pave the way for Human 2.0 you must phase out Human 1.0. This is happening through plummeting sperm counts and making women infertile through an onslaught of chemicals, radiation (including smartphones in pockets of men) and mRNA 'vaccines'. Common agriculture pesticides are also having a devastating impact on human fertility. I have been tracking collapsing sperm counts in the books for a long time and in 2021 came a book by fertility scientist and reproductive epidemiologist Shanna Swan, *Count Down: How Our Modern World Is Threatening Sperm Counts, Altering Male and Female Reproductive Development and Imperiling the Future of the Human Race*. She reports how the global fertility rate dropped by *half* between 1960 and 2016 with America's birth rate 16 percent below where it needs to be to sustain the population. Women are experiencing declining egg quality, more miscarriages, and more couples suffer from infertility. Other findings were an increase in erectile dysfunction, infant boys developing more genital abnormalities, male problems with conception, and plunging levels of the male hormone testosterone which would explain why so many men have lost their backbone and masculinity. This has been very evident during the 'Covid' hoax when women have been prominent among the Pushbackers and big strapping blokes have bowed their heads, covered their faces with a nappy and quietly submitted. Mind control expert Cathy O'Brien also points to how global education introduced the concept of 'we're all winners' in sport and classrooms: 'Competition was defused, and it in turn defused a sense of fighting back.' This is another version of the 'equity' doctrine in which you drive down rather than raise up. What a contrast in Cult-controlled China with its global ambitions

where the government published plans in January, 2021, to 'cultivate masculinity' in boys from kindergarten through to high school in the face of a 'masculinity crisis'. A government adviser said boys would be soon become 'delicate, timid and effeminate' unless action was taken. Don't expect any similar policy in the targeted West. A 2006 study showed that a 65-year-old man in 2002 had testosterone levels 15 percent lower than a 65-year-old man in 1987 while a 2020 study found a similar story with young adults and adolescents. Men are getting prescriptions for testosterone replacement therapy which causes an even greater drop in sperm count with up to 99 percent seeing sperm counts drop to zero during the treatment. More sperm is defective and malfunctioning with some having two heads or not pursuing an egg.

A class of *synthetic* chemicals known as phthalates are being blamed for the decline. These are found everywhere in plastics, shampoos, cosmetics, furniture, flame retardants, personal care products, pesticides, canned foods and even receipts. Why till receipts? Everyone touches them. Let no one delude themselves that all this is not systematic to advance the long-time agenda for human body transformation. Phthalates mimic hormones and disrupt the hormone balance causing testosterone to fall and genital birth defects in male infants. Animals and fish have been affected in the same way due to phthalates and other toxins in rivers. When fish turn gay or change sex through chemicals in rivers and streams it is a pointer to why there has been such an increase in gay people and the sexually confused. It doesn't matter to me what sexuality people choose to be, but if it's being affected by chemical pollution and consumption then we need to know. Does anyone really think that this is not connected to the transgender agenda, the war on men and the condemnation of male 'toxic masculinity'? You watch this being followed by 'toxic femininity'. It's already happening. When breastfeeding becomes 'chest-feeding', pregnant women become pregnant people along with all the other Woke claptrap you know that the world is going insane and there's a Cult scam in progress. Transgender activists are promoting the Cult agenda while Cult

billionaires support and fund the insanity as they laugh themselves to sleep at the sheer stupidity for which humans must be infamous in galaxies far, far away.

‘Covid vaccines’ and female infertility

We can now see why the ‘vaccine’ has been connected to potential infertility in women. Dr Michael Yeadon, former Vice President and Chief Scientific Advisor at Pfizer, and Dr Wolfgang Wodarg in Germany, filed a petition with the European Medicines Agency in December, 2020, urging them to stop trials for the Pfizer/BioNTech shot and all other mRNA trials until further studies had been done. They were particularly concerned about possible effects on fertility with ‘vaccine’-produced antibodies attacking the protein Syncytin-1 which is responsible for developing the placenta. The result would be infertility ‘of indefinite duration’ in women who have the ‘vaccine’ with the placenta failing to form. Section 10.4.2 of the Pfizer/BioNTech trial protocol says that pregnant women or those who might become so should not have mRNA shots. Section 10.4 warns men taking mRNA shots to ‘be abstinent from heterosexual intercourse’ and not to donate sperm. The UK government said that it *did not know* if the mRNA procedure had an effect on fertility. *Did not know?* These people have to go to jail. UK government advice did not recommend at the start that pregnant women had the shot and said they should avoid pregnancy for at least two months after ‘vaccination’. The ‘advice’ was later updated to pregnant women should only have the ‘vaccine’ if the benefits outweighed the risks to mother and foetus. What the hell is that supposed to mean? Then ‘spontaneous abortions’ began to appear and rapidly increase on the adverse reaction reporting schemes which include only a fraction of adverse reactions. Thousands and ever-growing numbers of ‘vaccinated’ women are describing changes to their menstrual cycle with heavier blood flow, irregular periods and menstruating again after going through the menopause – all links to reproduction effects. Women are passing blood clots and the lining of their uterus while men report erectile dysfunction and blood effects. Most

significantly of all *unvaccinated* women began to report similar menstrual changes after interaction with '*vaccinated*' people and men and children were also affected with bleeding noses, blood clots and other conditions. 'Shedding' is when vaccinated people can emit the content of a vaccine to affect the unvaccinated, but this is different. 'Vaccinated' people were not shedding a 'live virus' allegedly in 'vaccines' as before because the fake 'Covid vaccines' involve synthetic material and other toxicity. Doctors exposing what is happening prefer the term 'transmission' to shedding. Somehow those that have had the shots are transmitting effects to those that haven't. Dr Carrie Madej said the nano-content of the 'vaccines' can 'act like an antenna' to others around them which fits perfectly with my own conclusions. This 'vaccine' transmission phenomenon was becoming known as the book went into production and I deal with this further in the Postscript.

Vaccine effects on sterility are well known. The World Health Organization was accused in 2014 of sterilising millions of women in Kenya with the evidence confirmed by the content of the vaccines involved. The same WHO behind the 'Covid' hoax admitted its involvement for more than ten years with the vaccine programme. Other countries made similar claims. Charges were lodged by Tanzania, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the Philippines. The Gardasil vaccine claimed to protect against a genital 'virus' known as HPV has also been linked to infertility. Big Pharma and the WHO (same thing) are criminal and satanic entities. Then there's the Bill Gates Foundation which is connected through funding and shared interests with 20 pharmaceutical giants and laboratories. He stands accused of directing the policy of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), vaccine alliance GAVI, and other groupings, to advance the vaccine agenda and silence opposition at great cost to women and children. At the same time Gates wants to reduce the global population. Coincidence?

Great Reset = Smart Grid = new human

The Cult agenda I have been exposing for 30 years is now being openly promoted by Cult assets like Gates and Klaus Schwab of the World Economic Forum under code-terms like the 'Great Reset', 'Build Back Better' and 'a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world'. What provided this 'rare but narrow window of opportunity'? The 'Covid' hoax did. Who created that? *They* did. My books from not that long ago warned about the planned 'Internet of Things' (IoT) and its implications for human freedom. This was the plan to connect all technology to the Internet and artificial intelligence and today we are way down that road with an estimated 36 billion devices connected to the World Wide Web and that figure is projected to be 76 billion by 2025. I further warned that the Cult planned to go beyond that to the Internet of *Everything* when the human brain was connected via AI to the Internet and Kurzweil's 'cloud'. Now we have Cult operatives like Schwab calling for precisely that under the term 'Internet of Bodies', a fusion of the physical, digital and biological into one centrally-controlled Smart Grid system which the Cult refers to as the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution'. They talk about the 'biological', but they really mean the synthetic-biological which is required to fully integrate the human body and brain into the Smart Grid and artificial intelligence planned to replace the human mind. We have everything being synthetically manipulated including the natural world through GMO and smart dust, the food we eat and the human body itself with synthetic 'vaccines'. I said in *The Answer* that we would see the Cult push for synthetic meat to replace animals and in February, 2021, the so predictable psychopath Bill Gates called for the introduction of synthetic meat to save us all from 'climate change'. The climate hoax just keeps on giving like the 'Covid' hoax. The war on meat by vegan activists is a carbon (oops, sorry) copy of the manipulation of transgender activists. They have no idea (except their inner core) that they are being used to promote and impose the agenda of the Cult or that they are only the *vehicle* and not the *reason*. This is not to say those who choose not to eat meat shouldn't be respected and supported in that right, but there are ulterior motives

for those in power. A *Forbes* article in December, 2019, highlighted the plan so beloved of Schwab and the Cult under the heading: 'What Is The Internet of Bodies? And How Is It Changing Our World?' The article said the human body is the latest data platform (remember 'our vaccine is an operating system'). *Forbes* described the plan very accurately and the words could have come straight out of my books from long before:

The Internet of Bodies (IoB) is an extension of the IoT and basically connects the human body to a network through devices that are ingested, implanted, or connected to the body in some way. Once connected, data can be exchanged, and the body and device can be remotely monitored and controlled.

They were really describing a human hive mind with human perception centrally-dictated via an AI connection as well as allowing people to be 'remotely monitored and controlled'. Everything from a fridge to a human mind could be directed from a central point by these insane psychopaths and 'Covid vaccines' are crucial to this. *Forbes* explained the process I mentioned earlier of holdable and wearable technology followed by implantable. The article said there were three generations of the Internet of Bodies that include:

- Body external: These are wearable devices such as Apple Watches or Fitbits that can monitor our health.
- Body internal: These include pacemakers, cochlear implants, and digital pills that go inside our bodies to monitor or control various aspects of health.
- Body embedded: The third generation of the Internet of Bodies is embedded technology where technology and the human body are melded together and have a real-time connection to a remote machine.

Forbes noted the development of the Brain Computer Interface (BCI) which merges the brain with an external device for monitoring and controlling in real-time. 'The ultimate goal is to help restore function to individuals with disabilities by using brain signals rather than conventional neuromuscular pathways.' Oh, do fuck off. The goal of brain interface technology is controlling human thought and emotion from the central point in a hive mind serving its masters wishes. Many people are now agreeing to be chipped to open doors without a key. You can recognise them because they'll be wearing a mask, social distancing and lining up for the 'vaccine'. The Cult plans a Great Reset money system after they have completed the demolition of the global economy in which 'money' will be exchanged through communication with body operating systems. Rand Corporation, a Cult-owned think tank, said of the Internet of Bodies or IoB:

Internet of Bodies technologies fall under the broader IoT umbrella. But as the name suggests, IoB devices introduce an even more intimate interplay between humans and gadgets. IoB devices monitor the human body, collect health metrics and other personal information, and transmit those data over the Internet. Many devices, such as fitness trackers, are already in use ... IoB devices ... and those in development can track, record, and store users' whereabouts, bodily functions, and what they see, hear, and even think.

Schwab's World Economic Forum, a long-winded way of saying 'fascism' or 'the Cult', has gone full-on with the Internet of Bodies in the 'Covid' era. 'We're entering the era of the Internet of Bodies', it declared, 'collecting our physical data via a range of devices that can be implanted, swallowed or worn'. The result would be a huge amount of health-related data that could improve human wellbeing around the world, and prove crucial in fighting the 'Covid-19 pandemic'. Does anyone think these clowns care about 'human wellbeing' after the death and devastation their pandemic hoax has purposely caused? Schwab and co say we should move forward with the Internet of Bodies because 'Keeping track of symptoms could help us stop the spread of infection, and quickly detect new cases'. How wonderful, but keeping track' is all they are really bothered

about. Researchers were investigating if data gathered from smartwatches and similar devices could be used as viral infection alerts by tracking the user's heart rate and breathing. Schwab said in his 2018 book *Shaping the Future of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*:

The lines between technologies and beings are becoming blurred and not just by the ability to create lifelike robots or synthetics. Instead it is about the ability of new technologies to literally become part of us. Technologies already influence how we understand ourselves, how we think about each other, and how we determine our realities. As the technologies ... give us deeper access to parts of ourselves, we may begin to integrate digital technologies into our bodies.

You can see what the game is. Twenty-four hour control and people – if you could still call them that – would never know when something would go ping and take them out of circulation. It's the most obvious rush to a global fascist dictatorship and the complete submission of humanity and yet still so many are locked away in their Cult-induced perceptual coma and can't see it.

Smart Grid control centres

The human body is being transformed by the 'vaccines' and in other ways into a synthetic cyborg that can be attached to the global Smart Grid which would be controlled from a central point and other sub-locations of Grid manipulation. Where are these planned to be? Well, China for a start which is one of the Cult's biggest centres of operation. The technological control system and technocratic rule was incubated here to be unleashed across the world after the 'Covid' hoax came out of China in 2020. Another Smart Grid location that will surprise people new to this is Israel. I have exposed in *The Trigger* how Sabbatian technocrats, intelligence and military operatives were behind the horrors of 9/11 and not 19 Arab hijackers' who somehow manifested the ability to pilot big passenger airliners when instructors at puddle-jumping flying schools described some of them as a joke. The 9/11 attacks were made possible through control of civilian and military air computer systems and those of the White House, Pentagon and connected agencies. See *The Trigger* – it

will blow your mind. The controlling and coordinating force were the Sabbatian networks in Israel and the United States which by then had infiltrated the entire US government, military and intelligence system. The real name of the American Deep State is 'Sabbatian State'. Israel is a tiny country of only nine million people, but it is one of the global centres of cyber operations and fast catching Silicon Valley in importance to the Cult. Israel is known as the 'start-up nation' for all the cyber companies spawned there with the Sabbatian specialisation of 'cyber security' that I mentioned earlier which gives those companies access to computer systems of their clients in real time through 'backdoors' written into the coding when security software is downloaded. The Sabbatian centre of cyber operations outside Silicon Valley is the Israeli military Cyber Intelligence Unit, the biggest infrastructure project in Israel's history, headquartered in the desert-city of Beersheba and involving some 20,000 'cyber soldiers'. Here are located a literal army of Internet trolls scanning social media, forums and comment lists for anyone challenging the Cult agenda. The UK military has something similar with its 77th Brigade and associated operations. The Beersheba complex includes research and development centres for other Cult operations such as Intel, Microsoft, IBM, Google, Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Cisco Systems, Facebook and Motorola. Techcrunch.com ran an article about the Beersheba global Internet technology centre headlined 'Israel's desert city of Beersheba is turning into a cybertech oasis':

The military's massive relocation of its prestigious technology units, the presence of multinational and local companies, a close proximity to Ben Gurion University and generous government subsidies are turning Beersheba into a major global cybertech hub. Beersheba has all of the ingredients of a vibrant security technology ecosystem, including Ben Gurion University with its graduate program in cybersecurity and Cyber Security Research Center, and the presence of companies such as EMC, Deutsche Telekom, PayPal, Oracle, IBM, and Lockheed Martin. It's also the future home of the INCB (Israeli National Cyber Bureau); offers a special income tax incentive for cyber security companies, and was the site for the relocation of the army's intelligence corps units.

Sabbatians have taken over the cyber world through the following process: They scan the schools for likely cyber talent and develop them at Ben Gurion University and their period of conscription in the Israeli Defense Forces when they are stationed at the Beersheba complex. When the cyber talented officially leave the army they are funded to start cyber companies with technology developed by themselves or given to them by the state. Much of this is stolen through backdoors of computer systems around the world with America top of the list. Others are sent off to Silicon Valley to start companies or join the major ones and so we have many major positions filled by apparently 'Jewish' but really Sabbatian operatives. Google, YouTube and Facebook are all run by 'Jewish' CEOs while Twitter is all but run by ultra-Zionist hedge-fund shark Paul Singer. At the centre of the Sabbatian global cyber web is the Israeli army's Unit 8200 which specialises in hacking into computer systems of other countries, inserting viruses, gathering information, instigating malfunction, and even taking control of them from a distance. A long list of Sabbatians involved with 9/11, Silicon Valley and Israeli cyber security companies are operatives of Unit 8200. This is not about Israel. It's about the Cult. Israel is planned to be a Smart Grid hub as with China and what is happening at Beersheba is not for the benefit of Jewish people who are treated disgustingly by the Sabbatian elite that control the country. A glance at the Nuremberg Codes will tell you that.

The story is much bigger than 'Covid', important as that is to where we are being taken. Now, though, it's time to really strap in. There's more ... much more ...

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Who controls the Cult?

Awake, arise or be forever fall'n
John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

I have exposed this far the level of the Cult conspiracy that operates in the world of the seen and within the global secret society and satanic network which operates in the shadows one step back from the seen. The story, however, goes much deeper than that.

The 'Covid' hoax is major part of the Cult agenda, but only part, and to grasp the biggest picture we have to expand our attention beyond the realm of human sight and into the infinity of possibility that we cannot see. It is from here, ultimately, that humanity is being manipulated into a state of total control by the force which dictates the actions of the Cult. How much of reality can we see? Next to damn all is the answer. We may appear to see all there is to see in the 'space' our eyes survey and observe, but little could be further from the truth. The human 'world' is only a tiny band of frequency that the body's visual and perceptual systems can decode into *perception* of a 'world'. According to mainstream science the electromagnetic spectrum is 0.005 percent of what exists in the Universe ([Fig 10](#)). The maximum estimate I have seen is 0.5 percent and either way it's miniscule. I say it is far, far, smaller even than 0.005 percent when you compare reality we see with the totality of reality that we don't. Now get this if you are new to such information: Visible light, the only band of frequency that we can see, is a *fraction* of the 0.005

percent (Fig 11 overleaf). Take this further and realise that our universe is one of infinite universes and that universes are only a fragment of overall reality – *infinite* reality. Then compare that with the almost infinitesimal frequency band of visible light or human sight. You see that humans are as near blind as it is possible to be without actually being so. Artist and filmmaker, Sergio Toporek, said:

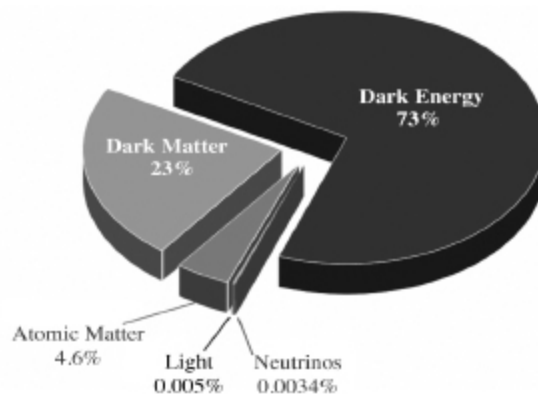


Figure 10: Humans can perceive such a tiny band of visual reality it's laughable.

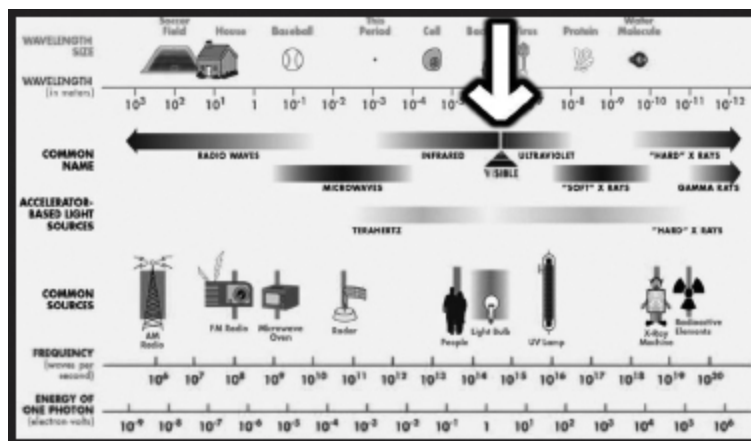


Figure 11: We can see a smear of the 0.005 percent electromagnetic spectrum, but we still know it all. Yep, makes sense.

Consider that you can see less than 1% of the electromagnetic spectrum and hear less than 1% of the acoustic spectrum. 90% of the cells in your body carry their own microbial DNA and are not 'you'. The atoms in your body are 99.9999999999999999% empty space and none of them are the ones you were born with ... Human beings have 46 chromosomes, two less than a potato.

The existence of the rainbow depends on the conical photoreceptors in your eyes; to animals without cones, the rainbow does not exist. So you don't just look at a rainbow, you create it. This is pretty amazing, especially considering that all the beautiful colours you see represent less than 1% of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Suddenly the 'world' of humans looks a very different place. Take into account, too, that Planet Earth when compared with the projected size of this single universe is the equivalent of a billionth of a pinhead. Imagine the ratio that would be when compared to infinite reality. To think that Christianity once insisted that Earth and humanity were the centre of everything. This background is vital if we are going to appreciate the nature of 'human' and how we can be manipulated by an unseen force. To human visual reality virtually *everything* is unseen and yet the prevailing perception within the institutions and so much of the public is that if we can't see it, touch it, hear it, taste it and smell it then it cannot exist. Such perception is indoctrinated and encouraged by the Cult and its agents because it isolates believers in the strictly limited, village-idiot, realm of the five senses where perceptions can be firewalled and information controlled. Most of those perpetuating the 'this-world-is-all-there-is' insanity are themselves indoctrinated into believing the same delusion. While major players and influencers know that official reality is laughable most of those in science, academia and medicine really believe the nonsense they peddle and teach succeeding generations. Those who challenge the orthodoxy are dismissed as nutters and freaks to protect the manufactured illusion from exposure. Observe the dynamic of the 'Covid' hoax and you will see how that takes the same form. The inner-circle psychopaths knows it's a gigantic scam, but almost the entirety of those imposing their fascist rules believe that 'Covid' is all that they're told it is.

Stolen identity

Ask people who they are and they will give you their name, place of birth, location, job, family background and life story. Yet that is not who they are – it is what they are *experiencing*. The difference is *absolutely crucial*. The true 'I', the eternal, infinite 'I', is consciousness,

a state of being aware. Forget 'form'. That is a vehicle for a brief experience. Consciousness does not come *from* the brain, but *through* the brain and even that is more symbolic than literal. We are awareness, pure awareness, and this is what withdraws from the body at what we call 'death' to continue our eternal beingness, *isness*, in other realms of reality within the limitlessness of infinity or the Biblical 'many mansions in my father's house'. Labels of a human life, man, woman, transgender, black, white, brown, nationality, circumstances and income are not who we are. They are what we are – awareness – is *experiencing* in a brief connection with a band of frequency we call 'human'. The labels are not the self; they are, to use the title of one of my books, a *Phantom Self*. I am not David Icke born in Leicester, England, on April 29th, 1952. I am the consciousness *having that experience*. The Cult and its non-human masters seek to convince us through the institutions of 'education', science, medicine, media and government that what we are *experiencing* is who we *are*. It's so easy to control and direct perception locked away in the bewildered illusions of the five senses with no expanded radar. Try, by contrast, doing the same with a humanity aware of its true self and its true power to consciously create its reality and experience. How is it possible to do this? We do it all day every day. If you perceive yourself as 'little me' with no power to impact upon your life and the world then your life experience will reflect that. You will hand the power you don't think you have to authority in all its forms which will use it to control your experience. This, in turn, will appear to confirm your perception of 'little me' in a self-fulfilling feedback loop. But that is what 'little me' really is – a *perception*. We are all 'big-me', infinite me, and the Cult has to make us forget that if its will is to prevail. We are therefore manipulated and pressured into self-identifying with human labels and not the consciousness/awareness *experiencing* those human labels.

The phenomenon of identity politics is a Cult-instigated manipulation technique to sub-divide previous labels into even smaller ones. A United States university employs this list of letters to

describe student identity: LGBTTQQFAGPBDSM or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, flexual, asexual, gender-fuck, polyamorous, bondage/discipline, dominance/submission and sadism/masochism. I'm sure other lists are even longer by now as people feel the need to self-identity the 'I' with the minutiae of race and sexual preference. Wokers programmed by the Cult for generations believe this is about 'inclusivity' when it's really the Cult locking them away into smaller and smaller versions of Phantom Self while firewalling them from the influence of their true self, the infinite, eternal 'I'. You may notice that my philosophy which contends that we are all unique points of attention/awareness within the same infinite whole or Oneness is the ultimate non-racism. The very sense of Oneness makes the judgement of people by their body-type, colour or sexuality utterly ridiculous and confirms that racism has no understanding of reality (including anti-white racism). Yet despite my perception of life Cult agents and fast-asleep Wokers label me racist to discredit my information while they are themselves phenomenally racist and sexist. All they see is race and sexuality and they judge people as good or bad, demons or untouchables, by their race and sexuality. All they see is *Phantom Self* and perceive themselves in terms of Phantom Self. They are pawns and puppets of the Cult agenda to focus attention and self-identity in the five senses and play those identities against each other to divide and rule. Columbia University has introduced segregated graduations in another version of social distancing designed to drive people apart and teach them that different racial and cultural groups have nothing in common with each other. The last thing the Cult wants is unity. Again the pump-primers of this will be Cult operatives in the knowledge of what they are doing, but the rest are just the Phantom Self blind leading the Phantom Self blind. We *do* have something in common – we are all *the same consciousness* having different temporary experiences.

What is this 'human'?

Yes, what *is* 'human'? That is what we are supposed to be, right? I mean 'human'? True, but 'human' is the experience not the 'I'. Break it down to basics and 'human' is the way that information is processed. If we are to experience and interact with this band of frequency we call the 'world' we must have a vehicle that operates within that band of frequency. Our consciousness in its prime form cannot do that; it is way beyond the frequency of the human realm. My consciousness or awareness could not tap these keys and pick up the cup in front of me in the same way that radio station A cannot interact with radio station B when they are on different frequencies. The human body is the means through which we have that interaction. I have long described the body as a biological computer which processes information in a way that allows consciousness to experience this reality. The body is a receiver, transmitter and processor of information in a particular way that we call human. We visually perceive only the world of the five senses in a wakened state – that is the limit of the body's visual decoding system. In truth it's not even visual in the way we experience 'visual reality' as I will come to in a moment. We are 'human' because the body processes the information sources of human into a reality and behaviour system that we *perceive* as human. Why does an elephant act like an elephant and not like a human or a duck? The elephant's biological computer is a different information field and processes information according to that program into a visual and behaviour type we call an elephant. The same applies to everything in our reality. These body information fields are perpetuated through procreation (like making a copy of a software program). The Cult wants to break that cycle and intervene technologically to transform the human information field into one that will change what we call humanity. If it can change the human information field it will change the way that field processes information and change humanity both 'physically' and psychologically. Hence the *messenger* (information) RNA 'vaccines' and so much more that is targeting human genetics by changing the body's information – *messaging* – construct through food, drink, radiation, toxicity and other means.

Reality that we experience is nothing like reality as it really is in the same way that the reality people experience in virtual reality games is not the reality they are really living in. The game is only a decoded source of information that appears to be a reality. Our world is also an information construct – a *simulation* (more later). In its base form our reality is a wavefield of information much the same in theme as Wi-Fi. The five senses decode wavefield information into electrical information which they communicate to the brain to decode into holographic (illusory ‘physical’) information. Different parts of the brain specialise in decoding different senses and the information is fused into a reality that appears to be outside of us but is really inside the brain and the genetic structure in general ([Fig 12](#) overleaf). DNA is a receiver-transmitter of information and a vital part of this decoding process and the body’s connection to other realities. Change DNA and you change the way we decode and connect with reality – see ‘Covid vaccines’. Think of computers decoding Wi-Fi. You have information encoded in a radiation field and the computer decodes that information into a very different form on the screen. You can’t see the Wi-Fi until its information is made manifest on the screen and the information on the screen is inside the computer and not outside. I have just described how we decode the ‘human world’. All five senses decode the waveform ‘Wi-Fi’ field into electrical signals and the brain (computer) constructs reality inside the brain and not outside – ‘You don’t just look at a rainbow, you create it’. Sound is a simple example. We don’t hear sound until the brain decodes it. Waveform sound waves are picked up by the hearing sense and communicated to the brain in an electrical form to be decoded into the sounds that we hear. Everything we hear is inside the brain along with everything we see, feel, smell and taste. Words and language are waveform fields generated by our vocal chords which pass through this process until they are decoded by the brain into words that we hear. Different languages are different frequency fields or sound waves generated by vocal chords. Late British philosopher Alan Watts said:

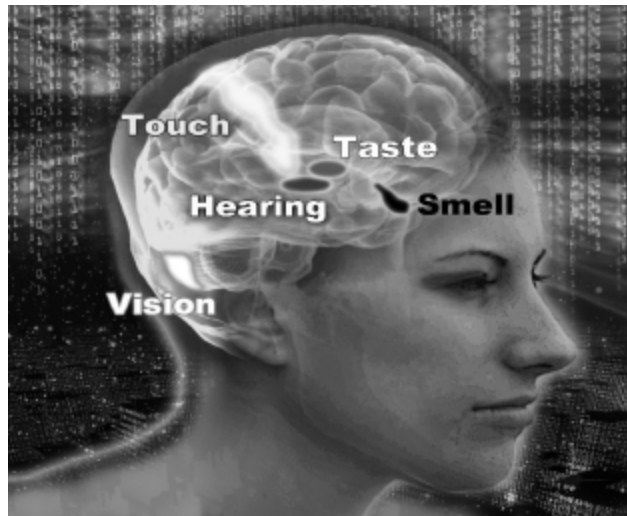


Figure 12: The brain receives information from the five senses and constructs from that our perceived reality.

[Without the brain] the world is devoid of light, heat, weight, solidity, motion, space, time or any other imaginable feature. All these phenomena are interactions, or transactions, of vibrations with a certain arrangement of neurons.

That's exactly what they are and scientist Robert Lanza describes in his book, *Biocentrism*, how we decode electromagnetic waves and energy into visual and 'physical' experience. He uses the example of a flame emitting photons, electromagnetic energy, each pulsing electrically and magnetically:

... these ... invisible electromagnetic waves strike a human retina, and if (and only if) the waves happen to measure between 400 and 700 nano meters in length from crest to crest, then their energy is just right to deliver a stimulus to the 8 million cone-shaped cells in the retina.

Each in turn send an electrical pulse to a neighbour neuron, and on up the line this goes, at 250 mph, until it reaches the ... occipital lobe of the brain, in the back of the head. There, a cascading complex of neurons fire from the incoming stimuli, and we subjectively perceive this experience as a yellow brightness occurring in a place we have been conditioned to call the 'external world'.

You hear what you decode

If a tree falls or a building collapses they make no noise unless someone is there to decode the energetic waves generated by the disturbance into what we call sound. Does a falling tree make a noise? Only if you hear it – *decode* it. Everything in our reality is a frequency field of information operating within the overall ‘Wi-Fi’ field that I call The Field. A vibrational disturbance is generated in The Field by the fields of the falling tree or building. These disturbance waves are what we decode into the sound of them falling. If no one is there to do that then neither will make any noise. Reality is created by the observer – *decoder* – and the *perceptions* of the observer affect the decoding process. For this reason different people – different *perceptions* – will perceive the same reality or situation in a different way. What one may perceive as a nightmare another will see as an opportunity. The question of why the Cult is so focused on controlling human perception now answers itself. All experienced reality is the act of decoding and we don’t experience Wi-Fi until it is decoded on the computer screen. The sight and sound of an Internet video is encoded in the Wi-Fi all around us, but we don’t see or hear it until the computer decodes that information. Taste, smell and touch are all phenomena of the brain as a result of the same process. We don’t taste, smell or feel anything except in the brain and there are pain relief techniques that seek to block the signal from the site of discomfort to the brain because if the brain doesn’t decode that signal we don’t feel pain. Pain is in the brain and only appears to be at the point of impact thanks to the feedback loop between them. We don’t see anything until electrical information from the sight senses is decoded in an area at the back of the brain. If that area is damaged we can go blind when our eyes are perfectly okay. So why do we go blind if we damage an eye? We damage the information processing between the waveform visual information and the visual decoding area of the brain. If information doesn’t reach the brain in a form it can decode then we can’t see the visual reality that it represents. What’s more the brain is decoding only a fraction of the information it receives and the rest is absorbed by the

sub-conscious mind. This explanation is from the science magazine, *Wonderpedia*:

Every second, 11 million sensations crackle along these [brain] pathways ... The brain is confronted with an alarming array of images, sounds and smells which it rigorously filters down until it is left with a manageable list of around 40. Thus 40 sensations per second make up what we perceive as reality.

The 'world' is not what people are told to believe that is it and the inner circles of the Cult *know that*.

Illusory 'physical' reality

We can only see a smear of 0.005 percent of the Universe which is only one of a vast array of universes – 'mansions' – within infinite reality. Even then the brain decodes only 40 pieces of information ('sensations') from a potential *11 million* that we receive every second. Two points strike you from this immediately: The sheer breathtaking stupidity of believing we know anything so rigidly that there's nothing more to know; and the potential for these processes to be manipulated by a malevolent force to control the reality of the population. One thing I can say for sure with no risk of contradiction is that when you can perceive an almost indescribable fraction of infinite reality there is always more to know as in tidal waves of it. Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates was so right when he said that wisdom is to know how little we know. How obviously true that is when you think that we are experiencing a physical world of solidity that is neither physical nor solid and a world of apartness when everything is connected. Cult-controlled 'science' dismisses the so-called 'paranormal' and all phenomena related to that when the 'para'-normal is perfectly normal and explains the alleged 'great mysteries' which dumbfound scientific minds. There is a reason for this. A 'scientific mind' in terms of the mainstream is a material mind, a five-sense mind imprisoned in see it, touch it, hear it, smell it and taste it. Phenomena and happenings that can't be explained that way leave the 'scientific mind' bewildered and the rule is that if they

can't account for why something is happening then it can't, by definition, be happening. I beg to differ. Telepathy is thought waves passing through The Field (think wave disturbance again) to be decoded by someone able to connect with that wavelength (information). For example: You can pick up the thought waves of a friend at any distance and at the very least that will bring them to mind. A few minutes later the friend calls you. 'My god', you say, 'that's incredible – I was just thinking of you.' Ah, but *they* were thinking of *you* before they made the call and that's what you decoded. Native peoples not entrapped in five-sense reality do this so well it became known as the 'bush telegraph'. Those known as psychics and mediums (genuine ones) are doing the same only across dimensions of reality. 'Mind over matter' comes from the fact that matter and mind are the *same*. The state of one influences the state of the other. Indeed one *and* the other are illusions. They are aspects of the same field. Paranormal phenomena are all explainable so why are they still considered 'mysteries' or not happening? Once you go down this road of understanding you begin to expand awareness beyond the five senses and that's the nightmare for the Cult.



Figure 13: Holograms are not solid, but the best ones appear to be.

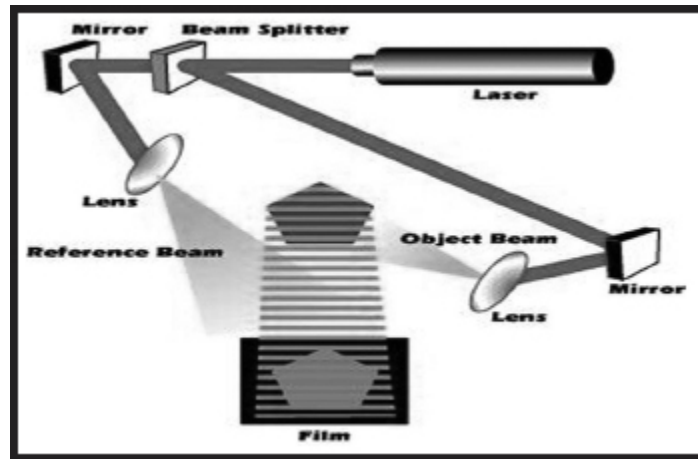


Figure 14: How holograms are created by capturing a waveform version of the subject image.

Holographic 'solidity'

Our reality is not solid, it is holographic. We are now well aware of holograms which are widely used today. Two-dimensional information is decoded into a three-dimensional reality that is not solid although can very much appear to be (Fig 13). Holograms are created with a laser divided into two parts. One goes directly onto a holographic photographic print ('reference beam') and the other takes a waveform image of the subject ('working beam') before being directed onto the print where it 'collides' with the other half of the laser (Fig 14). This creates a *waveform* interference pattern which contains the wavefield information of whatever is being photographed (Fig 15 overleaf). The process can be likened to dropping pebbles in a pond. Waves generated by each one spread out across the water to collide with the others and create a wave representation of where the stones fell and at what speed, weight and distance. A waveform interference pattern of a hologram is akin to the waveform information in The Field which the five senses decode into electrical signals to be decoded by the brain into a holographic illusory 'physical' reality. In the same way when a laser (think human attention) is directed at the waveform interference pattern a three-dimensional version of the subject is projected into apparently 'solid' reality (Fig 16). An amazing trait of holograms reveals more 'paranormal mysteries'. Information of the *whole*

hologram is encoded in waveform in every part of the interference pattern by the way they are created. This means that every *part* of a hologram is a smaller version of the whole. Cut the interference wave-pattern into four and you won't get four parts of the image. You get quarter-sized versions of the *whole* image. The body is a hologram and the same applies. Here we have the basis of acupuncture, reflexology and other forms of healing which identify representations of the whole body in all of the parts, hands, feet, ears, everywhere. Skilled palm readers can do what they do because the information of whole body is encoded in the hand. The concept of as above, so below, comes from this.



Figure 15: A waveform interference pattern that holds the information that transforms into a hologram.



Figure 16: Holographic people including 'Elvis' holographically inserted to sing a duet with Celine Dion.

The question will be asked of why, if solidity is illusory, we can't just walk through walls and each other. The resistance is not solid against solid; it is electromagnetic field against electromagnetic field and we decode this into the *experience* of solid against solid. We should also not underestimate the power of belief to dictate reality. What you believe is impossible *will be*. Your belief impacts on your decoding processes and they won't decode what you think is impossible. What we believe we perceive and what we perceive we experience. 'Can't dos' and 'impossibles' are like a firewall in a computer system that won't put on the screen what the firewall blocks. How vital that is to understanding how human experience has been hijacked. I explain in *The Answer, Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told* and other books a long list of 'mysteries' and 'paranormal' phenomena that are not mysterious and perfectly normal once you realise what reality is and how it works. 'Ghosts' can be seen to pass through 'solid' walls because the walls are not solid and the ghost is a discarnate entity operating on a frequency so different to that of the wall that it's like two radio stations sharing the same space while never interfering with each other. I have seen ghosts do this myself. The apartness of people and objects is also an illusion. Everything is connected by the Field like all sea life is connected by the sea. It's just that within the limits of our visual reality we only 'see' holographic information and not the field of information that connects everything and from which the holographic world is made manifest. If you can only see holographic 'objects' and not the field that connects them they will appear to you as unconnected to each other in the same way that we see the computer while not seeing the Wi-Fi.

What you don't know *can* hurt you

Okay, we return to those 'two worlds' of human society and the Cult with its global network of interconnecting secret societies and satanic groups which manipulate through governments, corporations, media, religions, etc. The fundamental difference between them is *knowledge*. The idea has been to keep humanity

ignorant of the plan for its total enslavement underpinned by a crucial ignorance of reality – who we are and where we are – and how we interact with it. ‘Human’ should be the interaction between our expanded eternal consciousness and the five-sense body experience. We are meant to be *in* this world in terms of the five senses but not *of* this world in relation to our greater consciousness and perspective. In that state we experience the small picture of the five senses within the wider context of the big picture of awareness beyond the five senses. Put another way the five senses see the dots and expanded awareness connects them into pictures and patterns that give context to the apparently random and unconnected. Without the context of expanded awareness the five senses see only apartness and randomness with apparently no meaning. The Cult and its other-dimensional controllers seek to intervene in the frequency realm where five-sense reality is supposed to connect with expanded reality and to keep the two apart (more on this in the final chapter). When that happens five-sense mental and emotional processes are no longer influenced by expanded awareness, or the True ‘I’, and instead are driven by the isolated perceptions of the body’s decoding systems. They are in the world *and* of it. Here we have the human plight and why humanity with its potential for infinite awareness can be so easily manipulatable and descend into such extremes of stupidity.

Once the Cult isolates five-sense mind from expanded awareness it can then program the mind with perceptions and beliefs by controlling information that the mind receives through the ‘education’ system of the formative years and the media perceptual bombardment and censorship of an entire lifetime. Limit perception and a sense of the possible through limiting knowledge by limiting and skewing information while censoring and discrediting that which could set people free. As the title of another of my books says ... *And The Truth Shall Set You Free*. For this reason the last thing the Cult wants in circulation is the truth about anything – especially the reality of the eternal ‘I’ – and that’s why it is desperate to control information. The Cult knows that information becomes perception

which becomes behaviour which, collectively, becomes human society. Cult-controlled and funded mainstream 'science' denies the existence of an eternal 'I' and seeks to dismiss and trash all evidence to the contrary. Cult-controlled mainstream religion has a version of 'God' that is little more than a system of control and dictatorship that employs threats of damnation in an afterlife to control perceptions and behaviour in the here and now through fear and guilt. Neither is true and it's the 'neither' that the Cult wishes to suppress. This 'neither' is that everything is an expression, a point of attention, within an infinite state of consciousness which is the real meaning of the term 'God'.

Perceptual obsession with the 'physical body' and five-senses means that 'God' becomes personified as a bearded bloke sitting among the clouds or a raging bully who loves us if we do what 'he' wants and condemns us to the fires of hell if we don't. These are no more than a 'spiritual' fairy tales to control and dictate events and behaviour through fear of this 'God' which has bizarrely made 'God-fearing' in religious circles a state to be desired. I would suggest that fearing *anything* is not to be encouraged and celebrated, but rather deleted. You can see why 'God fearing' is so beneficial to the Cult and its religions when *they* decide what 'God' wants and what 'God' demands (the Cult demands) that everyone do. As the great American comedian Bill Hicks said satirising a Christian zealot: 'I think what God meant to say.' How much of this infinite awareness ('God') that we access is decided by how far we choose to expand our perceptions, self-identity and sense of the possible. The scale of self-identity reflects itself in the scale of awareness that we can connect with and are influenced by – how much knowing and insight we have instead of programmed perception. You cannot expand your awareness into the infinity of possibility when you believe that you are little me Peter the postman or Mary in marketing and nothing more. I'll deal with this in the concluding chapter because it's crucial to how we turnaround current events.

Where the Cult came from

When I realised in the early 1990s there was a Cult network behind global events I asked the obvious question: When did it start? I took it back to ancient Rome and Egypt and on to Babylon and Sumer in Mesopotamia, the 'Land Between Two Rivers', in what we now call Iraq. The two rivers are the Tigris and Euphrates and this region is of immense historical and other importance to the Cult, as is the land called Israel only 550 miles away by air. There is much more going on with deep esoteric meaning across this whole region. It's not only about 'wars for oil'. Priceless artefacts from Mesopotamia were stolen or destroyed after the American and British invasion of Iraq in 2003 justified by the lies of Boy Bush and Tony Blair (their Cult masters) about non-existent 'weapons of mass destruction'.

Mesopotamia was the location of Sumer (about 5,400BC to 1,750BC), and Babylon (about 2,350BC to 539BC). Sabbatians may have become immensely influential in the Cult in modern times but they are part of a network that goes back into the mists of history. Sumer is said by historians to be the 'cradle of civilisation'. I disagree. I say it was the re-start of what we call human civilisation after cataclysmic events symbolised in part as the 'Great Flood' destroyed the world that existed before. These fantastic upheavals that I have been describing in detail in the books since the early 1990s appear in accounts and legends of ancient cultures across the world and they are supported by geological and biological evidence. Stone tablets found in Iraq detailing the Sumer period say the cataclysms were caused by non-human 'gods' they call the Anunnaki. These are described in terms of extraterrestrial visitations in which knowledge supplied by the Anunnaki is said to have been the source of at least one of the world's oldest writing systems and developments in astronomy, mathematics and architecture that were way ahead of their time. I have covered this subject at length in *The Biggest Secret* and *Children of the Matrix* and the same basic 'Anunnaki' story can be found in Zulu accounts in South Africa where the late and very great Zulu high shaman Credo Mutwa told me that the Sumerian Anunnaki were known by Zulus as the Chitauri or 'children of the serpent'. See my six-hour video interview with Credo on this subject entitled *The*

Reptilian Agenda recorded at his then home near Johannesburg in 1999 which you can watch on the Ickonic media platform.

The Cult emerged out of Sumer, Babylon and Egypt (and elsewhere) and established the Roman Empire before expanding with the Romans into northern Europe from where many empires were savagely imposed in the form of Cult-controlled societies all over the world. Mass death and destruction was their calling card. The Cult established its centre of operations in Europe and European Empires were Cult empires which allowed it to expand into a global force. Spanish and Portuguese colonialists headed for Central and South America while the British and French targeted North America. Africa was colonised by Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Germany. Some like Britain and France moved in on the Middle East. The British Empire was by far the biggest for a simple reason. By now Britain was the headquarters of the Cult from which it expanded to form Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The Sun never set on the British Empire such was the scale of its occupation. London remains a global centre for the Cult along with Rome and the Vatican although others have emerged in Israel and China. It is no accident that the 'virus' is alleged to have come out of China while Italy was chosen as the means to terrify the Western population into compliance with 'Covid' fascism. Nor that Israel has led the world in 'Covid' fascism and mass 'vaccination'.

You would think that I would mention the United States here, but while it has been an important means of imposing the Cult's will it is less significant than would appear and is currently in the process of having what power it does have deleted. The Cult in Europe has mostly loaded the guns for the US to fire. America has been controlled from Europe from the start through Cult operatives in Britain and Europe. The American Revolution was an illusion to make it appear that America was governing itself while very different forces were pulling the strings in the form of Cult families such as the Rothschilds through the Rockefellers and other subordinates. The Rockefellers are extremely close to Bill Gates and

established both scalpel and drug 'medicine' and the World Health Organization. They play a major role in the development and circulation of vaccines through the Rockefeller Foundation on which Bill Gates said his Foundation is based. Why wouldn't this be the case when the Rockefellers and Gates are on the same team? Cult infiltration of human society goes way back into what we call history and has been constantly expanding and centralising power with the goal of establishing a global structure to dictate everything. Look how this has been advanced in great leaps with the 'Covid' hoax.

The non-human dimension

I researched and observed the comings and goings of Cult operatives through the centuries and even thousands of years as they were born, worked to promote the agenda within the secret society and satanic networks, and then died for others to replace them. Clearly there had to be a coordinating force that spanned this entire period while operatives who would not have seen the end goal in their lifetimes came and went advancing the plan over millennia. I went in search of that coordinating force with the usual support from the extraordinary synchronicity of my life which has been an almost daily experience since 1990. I saw common themes in religious texts and ancient cultures about a non-human force manipulating human society from the hidden. Christianity calls this force Satan, the Devil and demons; Islam refers to the Jinn or Djinn; Zulus have their Chitauri (spelt in other ways in different parts of Africa); and the Gnostic people in Egypt in the period around and before 400AD referred to this phenomena as the 'Archons', a word meaning rulers in Greek. Central American cultures speak of the 'Predators' among other names and the same theme is everywhere. I will use 'Archons' as a collective name for all of them. When you see how their nature and behaviour is described all these different sources are clearly talking about the same force. Gnostics described the Archons in terms of 'luminous fire' while Islam relates the Jinn to 'smokeless fire'. Some refer to beings in form that could occasionally be seen, but the most common of common theme is that they operate from

unseen realms which means almost all existence to the visual processes of humans. I had concluded that this was indeed the foundation of human control and that the Cult was operating within the human frequency band on behalf of this hidden force when I came across the writings of Gnostics which supported my conclusions in the most extraordinary way.

A sealed earthen jar was found in 1945 near the town of Nag Hammadi about 75-80 miles north of Luxor on the banks of the River Nile in Egypt. Inside was a treasure trove of manuscripts and texts left by the Gnostic people some 1,600 years earlier. They included 13 leather-bound papyrus codices (manuscripts) and more than 50 texts written in Coptic Egyptian estimated to have been hidden in the jar in the period of 400AD although the source of the information goes back much further. Gnostics oversaw the Great or Royal Library of Alexandria, the fantastic depository of ancient texts detailing advanced knowledge and accounts of human history. The Library was dismantled and destroyed in stages over a long period with the death-blow delivered by the Cult-established Roman Church in the period around 415AD. The Church of Rome was the Church of Babylon relocated as I said earlier. Gnostics were not a race. They were a way of perceiving reality. Whenever they established themselves and their information circulated the terrorists of the Church of Rome would target them for destruction. This happened with the Great Library and with the Gnostic Cathars who were burned to death by the psychopaths after a long period of oppression at the siege of the Castle of Monségur in southern France in 1244. The Church has always been terrified of Gnostic information which demolishes the official Christian narrative although there is much in the Bible that supports the Gnostic view if you read it in another way. To anyone studying the texts of what became known as the Nag Hammadi Library it is clear that great swathes of Christian and Biblical belief has its origin with Gnostics sources going back to Sumer. Gnostic themes have been twisted to manipulate the perceived reality of Bible believers. Biblical texts have been in the open for centuries where they could be changed while Gnostic

documents found at Nag Hammadi were sealed away and untouched for 1,600 years. What you see is what they wrote.

Use your *pneuma* not your *nous*

Gnosticism and Gnostic come from 'gnosis' which means knowledge, or rather *secret* knowledge, in the sense of spiritual awareness – knowledge about reality and life itself. The desperation of the Cult's Church of Rome to destroy the Gnostics can be understood when the knowledge they were circulating was the last thing the Cult wanted the population to know. Sixteen hundred years later the same Cult is working hard to undermine and silence me for the same reason. The dynamic between knowledge and ignorance is a constant. 'Time' appears to move on, but essential themes remain the same. We are told to 'use your nous', a Gnostic word for head/brain/intelligence. They said, however, that spiritual awakening or 'salvation' could only be secured by expanding awareness *beyond* what they called *nous* and into *pneuma* or Infinite Self. Obviously as I read these texts the parallels with what I have been saying since 1990 were fascinating to me. There is a universal truth that spans human history and in that case why wouldn't we be talking the same language 16 centuries apart? When you free yourself from the perception program of the five senses and explore expanded realms of consciousness you are going to connect with the same information no matter what the perceived 'era' within a manufactured timeline of a single and tiny range of manipulated frequency. Humans working with 'smart' technology or knocking rocks together in caves is only a timeline appearing to operate within the human frequency band. Expanded awareness and the knowledge it holds have always been there whether the era be Stone Age or computer age. We can only access that knowledge by opening ourselves to its frequency which the five-sense prison cell is designed to stop us doing. Gates, Fauci, Whitty, Vallance, Zuckerberg, Brin, Page, Wojcicki, Bezos, and all the others behind the 'Covid' hoax clearly have a long wait before their range of frequency can make that connection given that an open heart is

crucial to that as we shall see. Instead of accessing knowledge directly through expanded awareness it is given to Cult operatives by the secret society networks of the Cult where it has been passed on over thousands of years outside the public arena. Expanded realms of consciousness is where great artists, composers and writers find their inspiration and where truth awaits anyone open enough to connect with it. We need to go there fast.

Archon hijack

A fifth of the Nag Hammadi texts describe the existence and manipulation of the Archons led by a 'Chief Archon' they call 'Yaldabaoth', or the 'Demiurge', and this is the Christian 'Devil', 'Satan', 'Lucifer', and his demons. Archons in Biblical symbolism are the 'fallen ones' which are also referred to as fallen angels after the angels expelled from heaven according to the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These angels are claimed to tempt humans to 'sin' ongoing and you will see how accurate that symbolism is during the rest of the book. The theme of 'original sin' is related to the 'Fall' when Adam and Eve were 'tempted by the serpent' and fell from a state of innocence and 'obedience' (connection) with God into a state of disobedience (disconnection). The Fall is said to have brought sin into the world and corrupted everything including human nature. Yaldabaoth, the 'Lord Archon', is described by Gnostics as a 'counterfeit spirit', 'The Blind One', 'The Blind God', and 'The Foolish One'. The Jewish name for Yaldabaoth in Talmudic writings is Samael which translates as 'Poison of God', or 'Blindness of God'. You see the parallels. Yaldabaoth in Islamic belief is the Muslim Jinn devil known as Shaytan – Shaytan is Satan as the same themes are found all over the world in every religion and culture. The 'Lord God' of the Old Testament is the 'Lord Archon' of Gnostic manuscripts and that's why he's such a bloodthirsty bastard. Satan is known by Christians as 'the Demon of Demons' and Gnostics called Yaldabaoth the 'Archon of Archons'. Both are known as 'The Deceiver'. We are talking about the same 'bloke' for sure and these common themes

using different names, storylines and symbolism tell a common tale of the human plight.

Archons are referred to in Nag Hammadi documents as mind parasites, inverters, guards, gatekeepers, detainers, judges, pitiless ones and deceivers. The 'Covid' hoax alone is a glaring example of all these things. The Biblical 'God' is so different in the Old and New Testaments because they are not describing the same phenomenon. The vindictive, angry, hate-filled, 'God' of the Old Testament, known as Yahweh, is Yaldabaoth who is depicted in Cult-dictated popular culture as the 'Dark Lord', 'Lord of Time', Lord (Darth) Vader and Dormammu, the evil ruler of the 'Dark Dimension' trying to take over the 'Earth Dimension' in the Marvel comic movie, *Dr Strange*. Yaldabaoth is both the Old Testament 'god' and the Biblical 'Satan'. Gnostics referred to Yaldabaoth as the 'Great Architect of the Universe' and the Cult-controlled Freemason network calls their god 'the 'Great Architect of the Universe' (also Grand Architect). The 'Great Architect' Yaldabaoth is symbolised by the Cult as the all-seeing eye at the top of the pyramid on the Great Seal of the United States and the dollar bill. Archon is encoded in *arch*-itect as it is in *arch*-angels and *arch*-bishops. All religions have the theme of a force for good and force for evil in some sort of spiritual war and there is a reason for that – the theme is true. The Cult and its non-human masters are quite happy for this to circulate. They present themselves as the force for good fighting evil when they are really the force of evil (absence of love). The whole foundation of Cult modus operandi is inversion. They promote themselves as a force for good and anyone challenging them in pursuit of peace, love, fairness, truth and justice is condemned as a satanic force for evil. This has been the game plan throughout history whether the Church of Rome inquisitions of non-believers or 'conspiracy theorists' and 'anti-vaxxers' of today. The technique is the same whatever the timeline era.

Yaldabaoth is revolting (true)

Yaldabaoth and the Archons are said to have revolted against God with Yaldabaoth claiming to *be* God – the *All That Is*. The Old Testament ‘God’ (Yaldabaoth) demanded to be worshipped as such: ‘*I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me*’ (Isaiah 45:5). I have quoted in other books a man who said he was the unofficial son of the late Baron Philippe de Rothschild of the Mouton-Rothschild wine producing estates in France who died in 1988 and he told me about the Rothschild ‘revolt from God’. The man said he was given the name Phillip Eugene de Rothschild and we shared long correspondence many years ago while he was living under another identity. He said that he was conceived through ‘occult incest’ which (within the Cult) was ‘normal and to be admired’. ‘Phillip’ told me about his experience attending satanic rituals with rich and famous people whom he names and you can see them and the wider background to Cult Satanism in my other books starting with *The Biggest Secret*. Cult rituals are interactions with Archontic ‘gods’. ‘Phillip’ described Baron Philippe de Rothschild as ‘a master Satanist and hater of God’ and he used the same term ‘revolt from God’ associated with Yaldabaoth/Satan/Lucifer/the Devil in describing the Sabbatian Rothschild dynasty. ‘I played a key role in my family’s revolt from God’, he said. That role was to infiltrate in classic Sabbatian style the Christian Church, but eventually he escaped the mind-prison to live another life. The Cult has been targeting religion in a plan to make worship of the Archons the global one-world religion. Infiltration of Satanism into modern ‘culture’, especially among the young, through music videos, stage shows and other means, is all part of this.

Nag Hammadi texts describe Yaldabaoth and the Archons in their prime form as energy – consciousness – and say they can take form if they choose in the same way that consciousness takes form as a human. Yaldabaoth is called ‘formless’ and represents a deeply inverted, distorted and chaotic state of consciousness which seeks to attached to humans and turn them into a likeness of itself in an attempt at assimilation. For that to happen it has to manipulate

humans into low frequency mental and emotional states that match its own. Archons can certainly appear in human form and this is the origin of the psychopathic personality. The energetic distortion Gnostics called Yaldabaoth *is* psychopathy. When psychopathic Archons take human form that human will be a psychopath as an expression of Yaldabaoth consciousness. Cult psychopaths are Archons in human form. The principle is the same as that portrayed in the 2009 *Avatar* movie when the American military travelled to a fictional Earth-like moon called Pandora in the Alpha Centauri star system to infiltrate a society of blue people, or Na'vi, by hiding within bodies that looked like the Na'vi. Archons posing as humans have a particular hybrid information field, part human, part Archon, (the ancient 'demigods') which processes information in a way that manifests behaviour to match their psychopathic evil, lack of empathy and compassion, and stops them being influenced by the empathy, compassion and love that a fully-human information field is capable of expressing. Cult bloodlines interbreed, be they royalty or dark suits, for this reason and you have their obsession with incest. Interbreeding with full-blown humans would dilute the Archontic energy field that guarantees psychopathy in its representatives in the human realm.

Gnostic writings say the main non-human forms that Archons take are *serpentine* (what I have called for decades 'reptilian' amid unbounded ridicule from the Archontically-programmed) and what Gnostics describe as 'an unborn baby or foetus with grey skin and dark, unmoving eyes'. This is an excellent representation of the ET 'Greys' of UFO folklore which large numbers of people claim to have seen and been abducted by – Zulu shaman Credo Mutwa among them. I agree with those that believe in extraterrestrial or interdimensional visitations today and for thousands of years past. No wonder with their advanced knowledge and technological capability they were perceived and worshipped as gods for technological and other 'miracles' they appeared to perform. Imagine someone arriving in a culture disconnected from the modern world with a smartphone and computer. They would be

seen as a 'god' capable of 'miracles'. The Renegade Mind, however, wants to know the source of everything and not only the way that source manifests as human or non-human. In the same way that a Renegade Mind seeks the original source material for the 'Covid virus' to see if what is claimed is true. The original source of Archons in form is consciousness – the distorted state of consciousness known to Gnostics as Yaldabaoth.

'Revolt from God' is energetic disconnection

Where I am going next will make a lot of sense of religious texts and ancient legends relating to 'Satan', Lucifer' and the 'gods'. Gnostic descriptions sync perfectly with the themes of my own research over the years in how they describe a consciousness distortion seeking to impose itself on human consciousness. I've referred to the core of infinite awareness in previous books as Infinite Awareness in Awareness of Itself. By that I mean a level of awareness that knows that it is all awareness and is aware of all awareness. From here comes the frequency of love in its true sense and balance which is what love is on one level – the balance of all forces into a single whole called Oneness and Isness. The more we disconnect from this state of love that many call 'God' the constituent parts of that Oneness start to unravel and express themselves as a part and not a whole. They become individualised as intellect, mind, selfishness, hatred, envy, desire for power over others, and such like. This is not a problem in the greater scheme in that 'God', the *All That Is*, can experience all these possibilities through different expressions of itself including humans. What we as expressions of the whole experience the *All That Is* experiences. We are the *All That Is* experiencing itself. As we withdraw from that state of Oneness we disconnect from its influence and things can get very unpleasant and very stupid. Archontic consciousness is at the extreme end of that. It has so disconnected from the influence of Oneness that it has become an inversion of unity and love, an inversion of everything, an inversion of life itself. Evil is appropriately live written backwards. Archontic consciousness is obsessed with death, an inversion of life,

and so its manifestations in Satanism are obsessed with death. They use inverted symbols in their rituals such as the inverted pentagram and cross. Sabbatians as Archontic consciousness incarnate invert Judaism and every other religion and culture they infiltrate. They seek disunity and chaos and they fear unity and harmony as they fear love like garlic to a vampire. As a result the Cult, Archons incarnate, act with such evil, psychopathy and lack of empathy and compassion disconnected as they are from the source of love. How could Bill Gates and the rest of the Archontic psychopaths do what they have to human society in the 'Covid' era with all the death, suffering and destruction involved and have no emotional consequence for the impact on others? Now you know. Why have Zuckerberg, Brin, Page, Wojcicki and company callously censored information warning about the dangers of the 'vaccine' while thousands have been dying and having severe, sometimes life-changing reactions? Now you know. Why have Tedros, Fauci, Whitty, Vallance and their like around the world been using case and death figures they're aware are fraudulent to justify lockdowns and all the deaths and destroyed lives that have come from that? Now you know. Why did Christian Drosten produce and promote a 'testing' protocol that he knew couldn't test for infectious disease which led to a global human catastrophe. Now you know. The Archontic mind doesn't give a shit ([Fig 17](#)). I personally think that Gates and major Cult insiders are a form of AI cyborg that the Archons want humans to become.



Figure 17: Artist Neil Hague's version of the 'Covid' hierarchy.

Human batteries

A state of such inversion does have its consequences, however. The level of disconnection from the Source of All means that you withdraw from that source of energetic sustenance and creativity. This means that you have to find your own supply of energetic power and it has – *us*. When the Morpheus character in the first *Matrix* movie held up a battery he spoke a profound truth when he said: 'The Matrix is a computer-generated dream world built to keep us under control in order to change the human being into one of

these.' The statement was true in all respects. We do live in a technologically-generated virtual reality simulation (more very shortly) and we have been manipulated to be an energy source for Archontic consciousness. The Disney-Pixar animated movie *Monsters, Inc.* in 2001 symbolised the dynamic when monsters in their world had no energy source and they would enter the human world to terrify children in their beds, catch the child's scream, terror (low-vibrational frequencies), and take that energy back to power the monster world. The lead character you might remember was a single giant eye and the symbolism of the Cult's all-seeing eye was obvious. Every thought and emotion is broadcast as a frequency unique to that thought and emotion. Feelings of love and joy, empathy and compassion, are high, quick, frequencies while fear, depression, anxiety, suffering and hate are low, slow, dense frequencies. Which kind do you think Archontic consciousness can connect with and absorb? In such a low and dense frequency state there's no way it can connect with the energy of love and joy. Archons can only feed off energy compatible with their own frequency and they and their Cult agents want to delete the human world of love and joy and manipulate the transmission of low vibrational frequencies through low-vibrational human mental and emotional states. *We are their energy source.* Wars are energetic banquets to the Archons – a world war even more so – and think how much low-frequency mental and emotional energy has been generated from the consequences for humanity of the 'Covid' hoax orchestrated by Archons incarnate like Gates.

The ancient practice of human sacrifice 'to the gods', continued in secret today by the Cult, is based on the same principle. 'The gods' are Archontic consciousness in different forms and the sacrifice is induced into a state of intense terror to generate the energy the Archontic frequency can absorb. Incarnate Archons in the ritual drink the blood which contains an adrenaline they crave which floods into the bloodstream when people are terrorised. Most of the sacrifices, ancient and modern, are children and the theme of 'sacrificing young virgins to the gods' is just code for children. They

have a particular pre-puberty energy that Archons want more than anything and the energy of the young in general is their target. The California Department of Education wants students to chant the names of Aztec gods (Archontic gods) once worshipped in human sacrifice rituals in a curriculum designed to encourage them to 'challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, imperialist/colonial beliefs', join 'social movements that struggle for social justice', and 'build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic racism society'. It's the usual Woke crap that inverts racism and calls it anti-racism. In this case solidarity with 'indigenous tribes' is being used as an excuse to chant the names of 'gods' to which people were sacrificed (and still are in secret). What an example of Woke's inability to see beyond black and white, us and them, They condemn the colonisation of these tribal cultures by Europeans (quite right), but those cultures sacrificing people including children to their 'gods', and mass murdering untold numbers as the Aztecs did, is just fine. One chant is to the Aztec god Tezcatlipoca who had a man sacrificed to him in the 5th month of the Aztec calendar. His heart was cut out and he was eaten. Oh, that's okay then. Come on children ... after three ... Other sacrificial 'gods' for the young to chant their allegiance include Quetzalcoatl, Huitzilopochtli and Xipe Totec. The curriculum says that 'chants, affirmations, and energizers can be used to bring the class together, build unity around ethnic studies principles and values, and to reinvigorate the class following a lesson that may be emotionally taxing or even when student engagement may appear to be low'. Well, that's the cover story, anyway. Chanting and mantras are the repetition of a particular frequency generated from the vocal cords and chanting the names of these Archontic 'gods' tunes you into their frequency. That is the last thing you want when it allows for energetic synchronisation, attachment and perceptual influence. Initiates chant the names of their 'Gods' in their rituals for this very reason.

Vampires of the Woke

Paedophilia is another way that Archons absorb the energy of children. Paedophiles possessed by Archontic consciousness are used as the conduit during sexual abuse for discarnate Archons to vampire the energy of the young they desire so much. Stupendous numbers of children disappear every year never to be seen again although you would never know from the media. Imagine how much low-vibrational energy has been generated by children during the 'Covid' hoax when so many have become depressed and psychologically destroyed to the point of killing themselves. Shocking numbers of children are now taken by the state from loving parents to be handed to others. I can tell you from long experience of researching this since 1996 that many end up with paedophiles and assets of the Cult through corrupt and Cult-owned social services which in the reframing era has hired many psychopaths and emotionless automatons to do the job. Children are even stolen to order using spurious reasons to take them by the corrupt and secret (because they're corrupt) 'family courts'. I have written in detail in other books, starting with *The Biggest Secret* in 1997, about the ubiquitous connections between the political, corporate, government, intelligence and military elites (Cult operatives) and Satanism and paedophilia. If you go deep enough both networks have an interlocking leadership. The Woke mentality has been developed by the Cult for many reasons: To promote almost every aspect of its agenda; to hijack the traditional political left and turn it fascist; to divide and rule; and to target agenda pushbackers. But there are other reasons which relate to what I am describing here. How many happy and joyful Wokers do you ever see especially at the extreme end? They are a mental and psychological mess consumed by emotional stress and constantly emotionally cocked for the next explosion of indignation at someone referring to a female as a female. They are walking, talking, batteries as Morpheus might say emitting frequencies which both enslave them in low-vibrational bubbles of perceptual limitation and feed the Archons. Add to this the hatred claimed to be love; fascism claimed to 'anti-fascism', racism claimed to be 'anti-racism';

exclusion claimed to inclusion; and the abuse-filled Internet trolling. You have a purpose-built Archontic energy system with not a wind turbine in sight and all founded on Archontic *inversion*. We have whole generations now manipulated to serve the Archons with their actions and energy. They will be doing so their entire adult lives unless they snap out of their Archon-induced trance. Is it really a surprise that Cult billionaires and corporations put so much money their way? Where is the energy of joy and laughter, including laughing at yourself which is confirmation of your own emotional security? Mark Twain said: 'The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter.' We must use it all the time. Woke has destroyed comedy because it has no humour, no joy, sense of irony, or self-deprecation. Its energy is dense and intense. *Mmmmm*, lunch says the Archontic frequency. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was the Austrian philosopher and famous esoteric thinker who established Waldorf education or Steiner schools to treat children like unique expressions of consciousness and not minds to be programmed with the perceptions determined by authority. I'd been writing about this energy vampiring for decades when I was sent in 2016 a quote by Steiner. He was spot on:

There are beings in the spiritual realms for whom anxiety and fear emanating from human beings offer welcome food. When humans have no anxiety and fear, then these creatures starve. If fear and anxiety radiates from people and they break out in panic, then these creatures find welcome nutrition and they become more and more powerful. These beings are hostile towards humanity. Everything that feeds on negative feelings, on anxiety, fear and superstition, despair or doubt, are in reality hostile forces in super-sensible worlds, launching cruel attacks on human beings, while they are being fed ... These are exactly the feelings that belong to contemporary culture and materialism; because it estranges people from the spiritual world, it is especially suited to evoke hopelessness and fear of the unknown in people, thereby calling up the above mentioned hostile forces against them.

Pause for a moment from this perspective and reflect on what has happened in the world since the start of 2020. Not only will pennies drop, but billion dollar bills. We see the same theme from Don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian shaman in Mexico and the information source for Peruvian-born writer, Carlos Castaneda, who wrote a series of

books from the 1960s to 1990s. Don Juan described the force manipulating human society and his name for the Archons was the predator:

We have a predator that came from the depths of the cosmos and took over the rule of our lives. Human beings are its prisoners. The predator is our lord and master. It has rendered us docile, helpless. If we want to protest, it suppresses our protest. If we want to act independently, it demands that we don't do so ... indeed we are held prisoner!

They took us over because we are food to them, and they squeeze us mercilessly because we are their sustenance. Just as we rear chickens in coops, the predators rear us in human coops, humaneros. Therefore, their food is always available to them.

Different cultures, different eras, same recurring theme.

The 'ennoia' dilemma

Nag Hammadi Gnostic manuscripts say that Archon consciousness has no 'ennoia'. This is directly translated as 'intentionality', but I'll use the term 'creative imagination'. The *All That Is* in awareness of itself is the source of all creativity – all possibility – and the more disconnected you are from that source the more you are subsequently denied 'creative imagination'. Given that Archon consciousness is almost entirely disconnected it severely lacks creativity and has to rely on far more mechanical processes of thought and exploit the creative potential of those that do have 'ennoia'. You can see cases of this throughout human society. Archon consciousness almost entirely dominates the global banking system and if we study how that system works you will appreciate what I mean. Banks manifest 'money' out of nothing by issuing lines of 'credit' which is 'money' that has never, does not, and will never exist except in theory. It's a confidence trick. If you think 'credit' figures-on-a-screen 'money' is worth anything you accept it as payment. If you don't then the whole system collapses through lack of confidence in the value of that 'money'. Archontic bankers with no 'ennoia' are 'lending' 'money' that doesn't exist to humans that *do* have creativity – those that have the inspired ideas and create businesses and products. Archon banking feeds off human creativity

which it controls through 'money' creation and debt. Humans have the creativity and Archons exploit that for their own benefit and control while having none themselves. Archon Internet platforms like Facebook claim joint copyright of everything that creative users post and while Archontic minds like Zuckerberg may officially head that company it will be human creatives on the staff that provide the creative inspiration. When you have limitless 'money' you can then buy other companies established by creative humans. Witness the acquisition record of Facebook, Google and their like. Survey the Archon-controlled music industry and you see non-creative dark suit executives making their fortune from the human creativity of their artists. The cases are endless. Research the history of people like Gates and Zuckerberg and how their empires were built on exploiting the creativity of others. Archon minds cannot create out of nothing, but they are skilled (because they have to be) in what Gnostic texts call 'countermimicry'. They can imitate, but not innovate. Sabbatians trawl the creativity of others through backdoors they install in computer systems through their cybersecurity systems. Archon-controlled China is globally infamous for stealing intellectual property and I remember how Hong Kong, now part of China, became notorious for making counterfeit copies of the creativity of others – 'countermimicry'. With the now pervasive and all-seeing surveillance systems able to infiltrate any computer you can appreciate the potential for Archons to vampire the creativity of humans. Author John Lamb Lash wrote in his book about the Nag Hammadi texts, *Not In His Image*:

Although they cannot originate anything, because they lack the divine factor of ennoia (intentionality), Archons can imitate with a vengeance. Their expertise is simulation (HAL, virtual reality). The Demiurge [Yaldabaoth] fashions a heaven world copied from the fractal patterns [of the original] ... His construction is celestial kitsch, like the fake Italianate villa of a Mafia don complete with militant angels to guard every portal.

This brings us to something that I have been speaking about since the turn of the millennium. Our reality is a simulation; a virtual reality that we think is real. No, I'm not kidding.

Human reality? Well, virtually

I had pondered for years about whether our reality is 'real' or some kind of construct. I remembered being immensely affected on a visit as a small child in the late 1950s to the then newly-opened Planetarium on the Marylebone Road in London which is now closed and part of the adjacent Madame Tussauds wax museum. It was in the middle of the day, but when the lights went out there was the night sky projected in the Planetarium's domed ceiling and it appeared to be so real. The experience never left me and I didn't know why until around the turn of the millennium when I became certain that our 'night sky' and entire reality is a projection, a virtual reality, akin to the illusory world portrayed in the *Matrix* movies. I looked at the sky one day in this period and it appeared to me like the domed roof of the Planetarium. The release of the first *Matrix* movie in 1999 also provided a synchronistic and perfect visual representation of where my mind had been going for a long time. I hadn't come across the Gnostic Nag Hammadi texts then. When I did years later the correlation was once again astounding. As I read Gnostic accounts from 1,600 years and more earlier it was clear that they were describing the same simulation phenomenon. They tell how the Yaldabaoth 'Demiurge' and Archons created a 'bad copy' of original reality to rule over all that were captured by its illusions and the body was a prison to trap consciousness in the 'bad copy' fake reality. Read how Gnostics describe the 'bad copy' and update that to current times and they are referring to what we would call today a virtual reality simulation.

Author John Lamb Lash said 'the Demiurge fashions a heaven world copied from the fractal patterns' of the original through expertise in 'HAL' or virtual reality simulation. Fractal patterns are part of the energetic information construct of our reality, a sort of blueprint. If these patterns were copied in computer terms it would indeed give you a copy of a 'natural' reality in a non-natural frequency and digital form. The principle is the same as making a copy of a website. The original website still exists, but now you can change the copy version to make it whatever you like and it can

become very different to the original website. Archons have done this with our reality, a *synthetic* copy of prime reality that still exists beyond the frequency walls of the simulation. Trapped within the illusions of this synthetic Matrix, however, were and are human consciousness and other expressions of prime reality and this is why the Archons via the Cult are seeking to make the human body synthetic and give us synthetic AI minds to complete the job of turning the entire reality synthetic including what we perceive to be the natural world. To quote Kurzweil: 'Nanobots will infuse all the matter around us with information. Rocks, trees, everything will become these intelligent creatures.' Yes, *synthetic* 'creatures' just as 'Covid' and other genetically-manipulating 'vaccines' are designed to make the human body synthetic. From this perspective it is obvious why Archons and their Cult are so desperate to infuse synthetic material into every human with their 'Covid' scam.

Let there be (electromagnetic) light

Yaldabaoth, the force that created the simulation, or Matrix, makes sense of the Gnostic reference to 'The Great Architect' and its use by Cult Freemasonry as the name of its deity. The designer of the Matrix in the movies is called 'The Architect' and that trilogy is jam-packed with symbolism relating to these subjects. I have contended for years that the angry Old Testament God (Yaldabaoth) is the 'God' being symbolically 'quoted' in the opening of Genesis as 'creating the world'. This is not the creation of prime reality – it's the creation of the *simulation*. The Genesis 'God' says: 'Let there be Light: and there was light.' But what is this 'Light'? I have said for decades that the speed of light (186,000 miles per second) is not the fastest speed possible as claimed by mainstream science and is in fact the frequency walls or outer limits of the Matrix. You can't have a fastest or slowest anything within all possibility when everything is possible. The human body is encoded to operate within the speed of light or *within the simulation* and thus we see only the tiny frequency band of visible *light*. Near-death experiencers who perceive reality outside the body during temporary 'death' describe a very different

form of light and this is supported by the Nag Hammadi texts. Prime reality beyond the simulation ('Upper Aeons' to the Gnostics) is described as a realm of incredible beauty, bliss, love and harmony – a realm of 'watery light' that is so powerful 'there are no shadows'. Our false reality of Archon control, which Gnostics call the 'Lower Aeons', is depicted as a realm with a different kind of 'light' and described in terms of chaos, 'Hell', 'the Abyss' and 'Outer Darkness', where trapped souls are tormented and manipulated by demons (relate that to the 'Covid' hoax alone). The watery light theme can be found in near-death accounts and it is not the same as *simulation* 'light' which is electromagnetic or radiation light within the speed of light – the 'Lower Aeons'. Simulation 'light' is the 'luminous fire' associated by Gnostics with the Archons. The Bible refers to Yaldabaoth as 'that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world' (Revelation 12:9). I think that making a simulated copy of prime reality ('countermimicry') and changing it dramatically while all the time manipulating humanity to believe it to be real could probably meet the criteria of deceiving the whole world. Then we come to the Cult god Lucifer – the *Light Bringer*. Lucifer is symbolic of Yaldabaoth, the bringer of radiation light that forms the bad copy simulation within the speed of light. 'He' is symbolised by the lighted torch held by the Statue of Liberty and in the name 'Illuminati'. Sabbatian-Frankism declares that Lucifer is the true god and Lucifer is the real god of Freemasonry honoured as their 'Great or Grand Architect of the Universe' (simulation).

I would emphasise, too, the way Archontic technologically-generated luminous fire of radiation has deluged our environment since I was a kid in the 1950s and changed the nature of The Field with which we constantly interact. Through that interaction technological radiation is changing us. The Smart Grid is designed to operate with immense levels of communication power with 5G expanding across the world and 6G, 7G, in the process of development. Radiation is the simulation and the Archontic manipulation system. Why wouldn't the Archon Cult wish to unleash radiation upon us to an ever-greater extreme to form

Kurzweil's 'cloud'? The plan for a synthetic human is related to the need to cope with levels of radiation beyond even anything we've seen so far. Biological humans would not survive the scale of radiation they have in their script. The Smart Grid is a technological sub-reality within the technological simulation to further disconnect five-sense perception from expanded consciousness. It's a technological prison of the mind.

Infusing the 'spirit of darkness'

A recurring theme in religion and native cultures is the manipulation of human genetics by a non-human force and most famously recorded as the biblical 'sons of god' (the gods plural in the original) who interbred with the daughters of men. The Nag Hammadi *Apocryphon of John* tells the same story this way:

He [Yaldabaoth] sent his angels [Archons/demons] to the daughters of men, that they might take some of them for themselves and raise offspring for their enjoyment. And at first they did not succeed. When they had no success, they gathered together again and they made a plan together ... And the angels changed themselves in their likeness into the likeness of their mates, filling them with the spirit of darkness, which they had mixed for them, and with evil ... And they took women and begot children out of the darkness according to the likeness of their spirit.

Possession when a discarnate entity takes over a human body is an age-old theme and continues today. It's very real and I've seen it. Satanic and secret society rituals can create an energetic environment in which entities can attach to initiates and I've heard many stories of how people have changed their personality after being initiated even into lower levels of the Freemasons. I have been inside three Freemasonic temples, one at a public open day and two by just walking in when there was no one around to stop me. They were in Ryde, the town where I live, Birmingham, England, when I was with a group, and Boston, Massachusetts. They all felt the same energetically – dark, dense, low-vibrational and sinister. Demonic attachment can happen while the initiate has no idea what is going on. To them it's just a ritual to get in the Masons and do a bit of good

business. In the far more extreme rituals of Satanism human possession is even more powerful and they are designed to make possession possible. The hierarchy of the Cult is dictated by the power and perceived status of the possessing Archon. In this way the Archon hierarchy becomes the Cult hierarchy. Once the entity has attached it can influence perception and behaviour and if it attaches to the extreme then so much of its energy (information) infuses into the body information field that the hologram starts to reflect the nature of the possessing entity. This is the *Exorcist* movie type of possession when facial features change and it's known as shapeshifting. Islam's Jinn are said to be invisible tricksters who change shape, 'whisper', confuse and take human form. These are all traits of the Archons and other versions of the same phenomenon. Extreme possession could certainly infuse the 'spirit of darkness' into a partner during sex as the Nag Hammadi texts appear to describe. Such an infusion can change genetics which is also energetic information. Human genetics is information and the 'spirit of darkness' is information. Mix one with the other and change must happen. Islam has the concept of a 'Jinn baby' through possession of the mother and by Jinn taking human form. There are many ways that human genetics can be changed and remember that Archons have been aware all along of advanced techniques to do this. What is being done in human society today – and far more – was known about by Archons at the time of the 'fallen ones' and their other versions described in religions and cultures.

Archons and their human-world Cult are obsessed with genetics as we see today and they know this dictates how information is processed into perceived reality during a human life. They needed to produce a human form that would decode the simulation and this is symbolically known as 'Adam and Eve' who left the 'garden' (prime reality) and 'fell' into Matrix reality. The simulation is not a 'physical' construct (there is no 'physical'); it is a source of information. Think Wi-Fi again. The simulation is an energetic field encoded with information and body-brain systems are designed to decode that information encoded in wave or frequency form which

is transmitted to the brain as electrical signals. These are decoded by the brain to construct our sense of reality – an illusory ‘physical’ world that only exists in the brain or the mind. Virtual reality games mimic this process using the same sensory decoding system. Information is fed to the senses to decode a virtual reality that can appear so real, but isn’t (Figs 18 and 19). Some scientists believe – and I agree with them – that what we perceive as ‘physical’ reality only exists when we are looking or observing. The act of perception or focus triggers the decoding systems which turn waveform information into holographic reality. When we are not observing something our reality reverts from a holographic state to a waveform state. This relates to the same principle as a falling tree not making a noise unless someone is there to hear it or decode it. The concept makes sense from the simulation perspective. A computer is not decoding all the information in a Wi-Fi field all the time and only decodes or brings into reality on the screen that part of Wi-Fi that it’s decoding – focusing upon – at that moment.



Figure 18: Virtual reality technology ‘hacks’ into the body’s five-sense decoding system.



Figure 19: The result can be experienced as very ‘real’.

Interestingly, Professor Donald Hoffman at the Department of Cognitive Sciences at the University of California, Irvine, says that our experienced reality is like a computer interface that shows us only the level with which we interact while hiding all that exists beyond it: 'Evolution shaped us with a user interface that hides the truth. Nothing that we see is the truth – the very language of space and time and objects is the wrong language to describe reality.' He is correct in what he says on so many levels. Space and time are not a universal reality. They are a phenomenon of decoded *simulation* reality as part of the process of enslaving our sense of reality. Near-death experiencers report again and again how space and time did not exist as we perceive them once they were free of the body – body decoding systems. You can appreciate from this why Archons and their Cult are so desperate to entrap human attention in the five senses where we are in the Matrix and of the Matrix. Opening your mind to expanded states of awareness takes you beyond the information confines of the simulation and you become aware of knowledge and insights denied to you before. This is what we call 'awakening' – *awakening from the Matrix* – and in the final chapter I will relate this to current events.

Where are the 'aliens'?

A simulation would explain the so-called 'Fermi Paradox' named after Italian physicist Enrico Fermi (1901-1954) who created the first nuclear reactor. He considered the question of why there is such a lack of extraterrestrial activity when there are so many stars and planets in an apparently vast universe; but what if the night sky that we see, or think we do, is a simulated projection as I say? If you control the simulation and your aim is to hold humanity fast in essential ignorance would you want other forms of life including advanced life coming and going sharing information with humanity? Or would you want them to believe they were isolated and apparently alone? Themes of human isolation and apartness are common whether they be the perception of a lifeless universe or the fascist isolation laws of the 'Covid' era. Paradoxically the very

existence of a simulation means that we are not alone when some force had to construct it. My view is that experiences that people have reported all over the world for centuries with Reptilians and Grey entities are Archon phenomena as Nag Hammadi texts describe; and that benevolent 'alien' interactions are non-human groups that come in and out of the simulation by overcoming Archon attempts to keep them out. It should be highlighted, too, that Reptilians and Greys are obsessed with *genetics* and *technology* as related by cultural accounts and those who say they have been abducted by them. Technology is their way of overcoming some of the limitations in their creative potential and our technology-driven and controlled human society of today is *archetypical* Archon-Reptilian-Grey *modus operandi*. Technocracy is really *Archontocracy*. The Universe does not have to be as big as it appears with a simulation. There is no space or distance only information decoded into holographic reality. What we call 'space' is only the absence of holographic 'objects' and that 'space' is The Field of energetic information which connects everything into a single whole. The same applies with the artificially-generated information field of the simulation. The Universe is not big or small as a physical reality. It is decoded information, that's all, and its perceived size is decided by the way the simulation is encoded to make it appear. The entire night sky as we perceive it only exists in our brain and so where are those 'millions of light years'? The 'stars' on the ceiling of the Planetarium looked a vast distance away.

There's another point to mention about 'aliens'. I have been highlighting since the 1990s the plan to stage a fake 'alien invasion' to justify the centralisation of global power and a world military. Nazi scientist Werner von Braun, who was taken to America by Operation Paperclip after World War Two to help found NASA, told his American assistant Dr Carol Rosin about the Cult agenda when he knew he was dying in 1977. Rosin said that he told her about a sequence that would lead to total human control by a one-world government. This included threats from terrorism, rogue nations, meteors and asteroids before finally an 'alien invasion'. All of these

things, von Braun said, would be bogus and what I would refer to as a No-Problem-Reaction-Solution. Keep this in mind when 'the aliens are coming' is the new mantra. The aliens are not coming – they are *already here* and they have infiltrated human society while looking human. French-Canadian investigative journalist Serge Monast said in 1994 that he had uncovered a NASA/military operation called Project Blue Beam which fits with what Werner von Braun predicted. Monast died of a 'heart attack' in 1996 the day after he was arrested and spent a night in prison. He was 51. He said Blue Beam was a plan to stage an alien invasion that would include religious figures beamed holographically into the sky as part of a global manipulation to usher in a 'new age' of worshipping what I would say is the Cult 'god' Yaldabaoth in a one-world religion. Fake holographic asteroids are also said to be part of the plan which again syncs with von Braun. How could you stage an illusory threat from asteroids unless they were holographic inserts? This is pretty straightforward given the advanced technology outside the public arena and the fact that our 'physical' reality is holographic anyway. Information fields would be projected and we would decode them into the illusion of a 'physical' asteroid. If they can sell a global 'pandemic' with a 'virus' that doesn't exist what will humans not believe if government and media tell them?

All this is particularly relevant as I write with the Pentagon planning to release in June, 2021, information about 'UFO sightings'. I have been following the UFO story since the early 1990s and the common theme throughout has been government and military denials and cover up. More recently, however, the Pentagon has suddenly become more talkative and apparently open with Air Force pilot radar images released of unexplained craft moving and changing direction at speeds well beyond anything believed possible with human technology. Then, in March, 2021, former Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe said a Pentagon report months later in June would reveal a great deal of information about UFO sightings unknown to the public. He said the report would have 'massive implications'. The order to do this was included bizarrely

in a \$2.3 trillion 'coronavirus' relief and government funding bill passed by the Trump administration at the end of 2020. I would add some serious notes of caution here. I have been pointing out since the 1990s that the US military and intelligence networks have long had craft – 'flying saucers' or anti-gravity craft – which any observer would take to be extraterrestrial in origin. Keeping this knowledge from the public allows craft flown by *humans* to be perceived as alien visitations. I am not saying that 'aliens' do not exist. I would be the last one to say that, but we have to be streetwise here. President Ronald Reagan told the UN General Assembly in 1987: 'I occasionally think how quickly our differences worldwide would vanish if we were facing an alien threat from outside this world.' That's the idea. Unite against a common 'enemy' with a common purpose behind your 'saviour force' (the Cult) as this age-old technique of mass manipulation goes global.

Science moves this way ...

I could find only one other person who was discussing the simulation hypothesis publicly when I concluded it was real. This was Nick Bostrom, a Swedish-born philosopher at the University of Oxford, who has explored for many years the possibility that human reality is a computer simulation although his version and mine are not the same. Today the simulation and holographic reality hypothesis have increasingly entered the scientific mainstream. Well, the more open-minded mainstream, that is. Here are a few of the ever-gathering examples. American nuclear physicist Silas Beane led a team of physicists at the University of Bonn in Germany pursuing the question of whether we live in a simulation. They concluded that we probably do and it was likely based on a lattice of cubes. They found that cosmic rays align with that specific pattern. The team highlighted the Greisen–Zatsepin–Kuzmin (GZK) limit which refers to cosmic ray particle interaction with cosmic background radiation that creates an apparent boundary for cosmic ray particles. They say in a paper entitled 'Constraints on the Universe as a Numerical Simulation' that this 'pattern of constraint' is exactly what you

would find with a computer simulation. They also made the point that a simulation would create its own 'laws of physics' that would limit possibility. I've been making the same point for decades that the *perceived* laws of physics relate only to this reality, or what I would later call the simulation. When designers write codes to create computer and virtual reality games they are the equivalent of the laws of physics for that game. Players interact within the limitations laid out by the coding. In the same way those who wrote the codes for the simulation decided the laws of physics that would apply. These can be overridden by expanded states of consciousness, but not by those enslaved in only five-sense awareness where simulation codes rule. Overriding the codes is what people call 'miracles'. They are not. They are bypassing the encoded limits of the simulation. A population caught in simulation perception would have no idea that this was their plight. As the Bonn paper said: 'Like a prisoner in a pitch-black cell we would not be able to see the "walls" of our prison,' That's true if people remain mesmerised by the five senses. Open to expanded awareness and those walls become very clear. The main one is the speed of light.

American theoretical physicist James Gates is another who has explored the simulation question and found considerable evidence to support the idea. Gates was Professor of Physics at the University of Maryland, Director of The Center for String and Particle Theory, and on Barack Obama's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. He and his team found *computer codes* of digital data embedded in the fabric of our reality. They relate to on-off electrical charges of 1 and 0 in the binary system used by computers. 'We have no idea what they are doing there', Gates said. They found within the energetic fabric mathematical sequences known as error-correcting codes or block codes that 'reboot' data to its original state or 'default settings' when something knocks it out of sync. Gates was asked if he had found a set of equations embedded in our reality indistinguishable from those that drive search engines and browsers and he said: 'That is correct.' Rich Terrile, director of the Centre for Evolutionary Computation and Automated Design at NASA's Jet

Propulsion Laboratory, has said publicly that he believes the Universe is a digital hologram that must have been created by a form of intelligence. I agree with that in every way. Waveform information is delivered electrically by the senses to the brain which constructs a *digital* holographic reality that we call the 'world'. This digital level of reality can be read by the esoteric art of numerology. Digital holograms are at the cutting edge of holographics today. We have digital technology everywhere designed to access and manipulate our digital level of perceived reality. Synthetic mRNA in 'Covid vaccines' has a digital component to manipulate the body's digital 'operating system'.

Reality is numbers

How many know that our reality can be broken down to numbers and codes that are the same as computer games? Max Tegmark, a physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is the author of *Our Mathematical Universe* in which he lays out how reality can be entirely described by numbers and maths in the way that a video game is encoded with the 'physics' of computer games. Our world and computer virtual reality are essentially the same.

Tegmark imagines the perceptions of characters in an advanced computer game when the graphics are so good they don't know they are in a game. They think they can bump into real objects (electromagnetic resistance in our reality), fall in love and feel emotions like excitement. When they began to study the apparently 'physical world' of the video game they would realise that everything was made of pixels (which have been found in our energetic reality as must be the case when on one level our world is digital). What computer game characters thought was physical 'stuff', Tegmark said, could actually be broken down into numbers:

And we're exactly in this situation in our world. We look around and it doesn't seem that mathematical at all, but everything we see is made out of elementary particles like quarks and electrons. And what properties does an electron have? Does it have a smell or a colour or a texture? No! ... We physicists have come up with geeky names for [Electron] properties, like

electric charge, or spin, or lepton number, but the electron doesn't care what we call it, the properties are just numbers.

This is the illusory reality Gnostics were describing. This is the simulation. The A, C, G, and T codes of DNA have a binary value – A and C = 0 while G and T = 1. This has to be when the simulation is digital and the body must be digital to interact with it. Recurring mathematical sequences are encoded throughout reality and the body. They include the Fibonacci sequence in which the two previous numbers are added to get the next one, as in ... 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, etc. The sequence is encoded in the human face and body, proportions of animals, DNA, seed heads, pine cones, trees, shells, spiral galaxies, hurricanes and the number of petals in a flower. The list goes on and on. There are fractal patterns – a 'never-ending pattern that is infinitely complex and self-similar across all scales in the as above, so below, principle of holograms. These and other famous recurring geometrical and mathematical sequences such as Phi, Pi, Golden Mean, Golden Ratio and Golden Section are *computer codes* of the simulation. I had to laugh and give my head a shake the day I finished this book and it went into the production stage. I was sent an article in *Scientific American* published in April, 2021, with the headline 'Confirmed! We Live in a Simulation'. Two decades after I first said our reality is a simulation and the speed of light is its outer limit the article suggested that we do live in a simulation and that the speed of light is its outer limit. I left school at 15 and never passed a major exam in my life while the writer was up to his eyes in qualifications. As I will explain in the final chapter *knowing* is far better than thinking and they come from very different sources. The article rightly connected the speed of light to the processing speed of the 'Matrix' and said what has been in my books all this time ... 'If we are in a simulation, as it appears, then space is an abstract property written in code. It is not real'. No it's not and if we live in a simulation something created it and it wasn't *us*. 'That David Icke says we are manipulated by aliens' – he's crackers.'

Wow ...

The reality that humanity thinks is so real is an illusion. Politicians, governments, scientists, doctors, academics, law enforcement, media, school and university curriculums, on and on, are all founded on a world that *does not exist* except as a simulated prison cell. Is it such a stretch to accept that 'Covid' doesn't exist when our entire 'physical' reality doesn't exist? Revealed here is the knowledge kept under raps in the Cult networks of compartmentalised secrecy to control humanity's sense of reality by inducing the population to believe in a reality that's not real. If it wasn't so tragic in its experiential consequences the whole thing would be hysterically funny. None of this is new to Renegade Minds. Ancient Greek philosopher Plato (about 428 to about 347BC) was a major influence on Gnostic belief and he described the human plight thousands of years ago with his Allegory of the Cave. He told the symbolic story of prisoners living in a cave who had never been outside. They were chained and could only see one wall of the cave while behind them was a fire that they could not see. Figures walked past the fire casting shadows on the prisoners' wall and those moving shadows became their sense of reality. Some prisoners began to study the shadows and were considered experts on them (today's academics and scientists), but what they studied was only an illusion (today's academics and scientists). A prisoner escaped from the cave and saw reality as it really is. When he returned to report this revelation they didn't believe him, called him mad and threatened to kill him if he tried to set them free. Plato's tale is not only a brilliant analogy of the human plight and our illusory reality. It describes, too, the dynamics of the 'Covid' hoax. I have only skimmed the surface of these subjects here. The aim of this book is to crisply connect all essential dots to put what is happening today into its true context. All subject areas and their connections in this chapter are covered in great evidential detail in *Everything You Need To Know, But Have Never Been Told* and *The Answer*.

They say that bewildered people 'can't see the forest for the trees'. Humanity, however, can't see the forest for the *twigs*. The five senses

see only twigs while Renegade Minds can see the forest and it's the forest where the answers lie with the connections that reveals.

Breaking free of perceptual programming so the forest can be seen is the way we turn all this around. Not breaking free is how humanity got into this mess. The situation may seem hopeless, but I promise you it's not. We are a perceptual heartbeat from paradise if only we knew.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Escaping Wetiko

Life is simply a vacation from the infinite
Dean Cavanagh

Renegade Minds weave the web of life and events and see common themes in the apparently random. They are always there if you look for them and their pursuit is aided by incredible synchronicity that comes when your mind is open rather than mesmerised by what it thinks it can see.

Infinite awareness is infinite possibility and the more of infinite possibility that we access the more becomes infinitely possible. That may be stating the apparently obvious, but it is a devastatingly-powerful fact that can set us free. We are a point of attention within an infinity of consciousness. The question is how much of that infinity do we choose to access? How much knowledge, insight, awareness, wisdom, do we want to connect with and explore? If your focus is only in the five senses you will be influenced by a fraction of infinite awareness. I mean a range so tiny that it gives new meaning to infinitesimal. Limitation of self-identity and a sense of the possible limit accordingly your range of consciousness. We are what we think we are. Life is what we think it is. The dream is the dreamer and the dreamer is the dream. Buddhist philosophy puts it this way: 'As a thing is viewed, so it appears.' Most humans live in the realm of touch, taste, see, hear, and smell and that's the limit of their sense of the possible and sense of self. Many will follow a religion and speak of a God in his heaven, but their lives are still

dominated by the five senses in their perceptions and actions. The five senses become the arbiter of everything. When that happens all except a smear of infinity is sealed away from influence by the rigid, unyielding, reality bubbles that are the five-sense human or Phantom Self. Archon Cult methodology is to isolate consciousness within five-sense reality – the simulation – and then program that consciousness with a sense of self and the world through a deluge of life-long information designed to instil the desired perception that allows global control. Efforts to do this have increased dramatically with identity politics as identity bubbles are squeezed into the minutiae of five-sense detail which disconnect people even more profoundly from the infinite 'I'.

Five-sense focus and self-identity are like a firewall that limits access to the infinite realms. You only perceive one radio or television station and no other. We'll take that literally for a moment. Imagine a vast array of stations giving different information and angles on reality, but you only ever listen to one. Here we have the human plight in which the population is overwhelmingly confined to CultFM. This relates only to the frequency range of CultFM and limits perception and insight to that band – limits *possibility* to that band. It means you are connecting with an almost imperceptibly minuscule range of possibility and creative potential within the infinite Field. It's a world where everything seems apart from everything else and where synchronicity is rare. Synchronicity is defined in the dictionary as 'the happening by chance of two or more related or similar events at the same time'. Use of 'by chance' betrays a complete misunderstanding of reality. Synchronicity is not 'by chance'. As people open their minds, or 'awaken' to use the term, they notice more and more coincidences in their lives, bits of 'luck', apparently miraculous happenings that put them in the right place at the right time with the right people. Days become peppered with 'fancy meeting you here' and 'what are the chances of that?' My entire life has been lived like this and ever more so since my own colossal awakening in 1990 and 91 which transformed my sense of reality. Synchronicity is not 'by chance'; it is by accessing expanded

realms of possibility which allow expanded potential for manifestation. People broadcasting the same vibe from the same openness of mind tend to be drawn 'by chance' to each other through what I call frequency magnetism and it's not only people. In the last more than 30 years incredible synchronicity has also led me through the Cult maze to information in so many forms and to crucial personal experiences. These 'coincidences' have allowed me to put the puzzle pieces together across an enormous array of subjects and situations. Those who have breached the bubble of five-sense reality will know exactly what I mean and this escape from the perceptual prison cell is open to everyone whenever they make that choice. This may appear super-human when compared with the limitations of 'human', but it's really our natural state. 'Human' as currently experienced is consciousness in an unnatural state of induced separation from the infinity of the whole. I'll come to how this transformation into unity can be made when I have described in more detail the force that holds humanity in servitude by denying this access to infinite self.

The Wetiko factor

I have been talking and writing for decades about the way five-sense mind is systematically barricaded from expanded awareness. I have used the analogy of a computer (five-sense mind) and someone at the keyboard (expanded awareness). Interaction between the computer and the operator is symbolic of the interaction between five-sense mind and expanded awareness. The computer directly experiences the Internet and the operator experiences the Internet via the computer which is how it's supposed to be – the two working as one. Archons seek to control that point where the operator connects with the computer to stop that interaction ([Fig 20](#)). Now the operator is banging the keyboard and clicking the mouse, but the computer is not responding and this happens when the computer is taken over – *possessed* – by an appropriately-named computer 'virus'. The operator has lost all influence over the computer which goes its own way making decisions under the control of the 'virus'. I have

just described the dynamic through which the force known to Gnostics as Yaldabaoth and Archons disconnects five-sense mind from expanded awareness to imprison humanity in perceptual servitude.



Figure 20: The mind ‘virus’ I have been writing about for decades seeks to isolate five-sense mind (the computer) from the true ‘I’. (Image by Neil Hague).

About a year ago I came across a Native American concept of Wetiko which describes precisely the same phenomenon. Wetiko is the spelling used by the Cree and there are other versions including wintiko and windigo used by other tribal groups. They spell the name with lower case, but I see Wetiko as a proper noun as with Archons and prefer a capital. I first saw an article about Wetiko by writer and researcher Paul Levy which so synced with what I had been writing about the computer/operator disconnection and later the Archons. I then read his book, the fascinating *Dispelling Wetiko, Breaking the Spell of Evil*. The parallels between what I had concluded long before and the Native American concept of Wetiko were so clear and obvious that it was almost funny. For Wetiko see the Gnostic Archons for sure and the Jinn, the Predators, and every other name for a force of evil, inversion and chaos. Wetiko is the Native American name for the force that divides the computer from

the operator (Fig 21). Indigenous author Jack D. Forbes, a founder of the Native American movement in the 1960s, wrote another book about Wetiko entitled *Columbus And Other Cannibals – The Wetiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism* which I also read. Forbes says that Wetiko refers to an evil person or spirit ‘who terrorizes other creatures by means of terrible acts, including cannibalism’. Zulu shaman Credo Mutwa told me that African accounts tell how cannibalism was brought into the world by the Chitauri ‘gods’ – another manifestation of Wetiko. The distinction between ‘evil person or spirit’ relates to Archons/Wetiko possessing a human or acting as pure consciousness. Wetiko is said to be a sickness of the soul or spirit and a state of being that takes but gives nothing back – the Cult and its operatives perfectly described. Black Hawk, a Native American war leader defending their lands from confiscation, said European invaders had ‘poisoned hearts’ – Wetiko hearts – and that this would spread to native societies. Mention of the heart is very significant as we shall shortly see. Forbes writes: ‘Tragically, the history of the world for the past 2,000 years is, in great part, the story of the epidemiology of the wetiko disease.’ Yes, and much longer. Forbes is correct when he says: ‘The wetikos destroyed Egypt and Babylon and Athens and Rome and Tenochtitlan [capital of the Aztec empire] and perhaps now they will destroy the entire earth.’ Evil, he said, is the number one export of a Wetiko culture – see its globalisation with ‘Covid’. Constant war, mass murder, suffering of all kinds, child abuse, Satanism, torture and human sacrifice are all expressions of Wetiko and the Wetiko possessed. The world is Wetiko made manifest, *but it doesn’t have to be*. There is a way out of this even now.



Figure 21: The mind 'virus' is known to Native Americans as 'Wetiko'. (Image by Neil Hague).

Cult of Wetiko

Wetiko is the Yaldabaoth frequency distortion that seeks to attach to human consciousness and absorb it into its own. Once this connection is made Wetiko can drive the perceptions of the target which they believe to be coming from their own mind. All the horrors of history and today from mass killers to Satanists, paedophiles like Jeffrey Epstein and other psychopaths, are the embodiment of Wetiko and express its state of being in all its grotesqueness. The Cult is Wetiko incarnate, Yaldabaoth incarnate, and it seeks to facilitate Wetiko assimilation of humanity in totality into its distortion by manipulating the population into low frequency states that match its own. Paul Levy writes:

'Holographically enforced within the psyche of every human being the wetiko virus pervades and underlies the entire field of consciousness, and can therefore potentially manifest through any one of us at any moment if we are not mindful.' The 'Covid' hoax has achieved this with many people, but others have not fallen into Wetiko's frequency lair. Players in the 'Covid' human catastrophe including Gates, Schwab, Tedros, Fauci, Whitty, Vallance, Johnson, Hancock, Ferguson, Drosten, and all the rest, including the psychopath psychologists, are expressions of Wetiko. This is why

they have no compassion or empathy and no emotional consequence for what they do that would make them stop doing it. Observe all the people who support the psychopaths in authority against the Pushbackers despite the damaging impact the psychopaths have on their own lives and their family's lives. You are again looking at Wetiko possession which prevents them seeing through the lies to the obvious scam going on. *Why can't they see it?* Wetiko won't let them see it. The perceptual divide that has now become a chasm is between the Wetikoed and the non-Wetikoed.

Paul Levy describes Wetiko in the same way that I have long described the Archontic force. They are the same distorted consciousness operating across dimensions of reality: '... the subtle body of wetiko is not located in the third dimension of space and time, literally existing in another dimension ... it is able to affect ordinary lives by mysteriously interpenetrating into our three-dimensional world.' Wetiko does this through its incarnate representatives in the Cult and by weaving itself into The Field which on our level of reality is the electromagnetic information field of the simulation or Matrix. More than that, the simulation *is* Wetiko / Yaldabaoth. Caleb Scharf, Director of Astrobiology at Columbia University, has speculated that 'alien life' could be so advanced that it has transcribed itself into the quantum realm to become what we call physics. He said intelligence indistinguishable from the fabric of the Universe would solve many of its greatest mysteries:

Perhaps hyper-advanced life isn't just external. Perhaps it's already all around. It is embedded in what we perceive to be physics itself, from the root behaviour of particles and fields to the phenomena of complexity and emergence ... In other words, life might not just be in the equations. It might BE the equations [My emphasis].

Scharf said it is possible that 'we don't recognise advanced life because it forms an integral and unsuspecting part of what we've considered to be the natural world'. I agree. Wetiko/Yaldabaoth *is* the simulation. We are literally in the body of the beast. But that doesn't mean it has to control us. We all have the power to overcome Wetiko

influence and the Cult knows that. I doubt it sleeps too well because it knows that.

Which Field?

This, I suggest, is how it all works. There are two Fields. One is the fierce electromagnetic light of the Matrix within the speed of light; the other is the 'watery light' of The Field beyond the walls of the Matrix that connects with the Great Infinity. Five-sense mind and the decoding systems of the body attach us to the Field of Matrix light. They have to or we could not experience this reality. Five-sense mind sees only the Matrix Field of information while our expanded consciousness is part of the Infinity Field. When we open our minds, and most importantly our hearts, to the Infinity Field we have a mission control which gives us an expanded perspective, a road map, to understand the nature of the five-sense world. If we are isolated only in five-sense mind there is no mission control. We're on our own trying to understand a world that's constantly feeding us information to ensure we do not understand. People in this state can feel 'lost' and bewildered with no direction or radar. You can see ever more clearly those who are influenced by the Fields of Big Infinity or little five-sense mind simply by their views and behaviour with regard to the 'Covid' hoax. We have had this division throughout known human history with the mass of the people on one side and individuals who could see and intuit beyond the walls of the simulation – Plato's prisoner who broke out of the cave and saw reality for what it is. Such people have always been targeted by Wetiko/Archon-possessed authority, burned at the stake or demonised as mad, bad and dangerous. The Cult today and its global network of 'anti-hate', 'anti-fascist' Woke groups are all expressions of Wetiko attacking those exposing the conspiracy, 'Covid' lies and the 'vaccine' agenda.

Woke as a whole is Wetiko which explains its black and white mentality and how at one it is with the Wetiko-possessed Cult. Paul Levy said: 'To be in this paradigm is to still be under the thrall of a two-valued logic – where things are either true or false – of a

wetikoized mind.’ Wetiko consciousness is in a permanent rage, therefore so is Woke, and then there is Woke inversion and contradiction. ‘Anti-fascists’ act like fascists because fascists *and* ‘anti-fascists’ are both Wetiko at work. Political parties act the same while claiming to be different for the same reason. Secret society and satanic rituals are attaching initiates to Wetiko and the cold, ruthless, psychopathic mentality that secures the positions of power all over the world is Wetiko. Reframing ‘training programmes’ have the same cumulative effect of attaching Wetiko and we have their graduates described as automatons and robots with a cold, psychopathic, uncaring demeanour. They are all traits of Wetiko possession and look how many times they have been described in this book and elsewhere with regard to personnel behind ‘Covid’ including the police and medical profession. Climbing the greasy pole in any profession in a Wetiko society requires traits of Wetiko to get there and that is particularly true of politics which is not about fair competition and pre-eminence of ideas. It is founded on how many backs you can stab and arses you can lick. This culminated in the global ‘Covid’ coordination between the Wetiko possessed who pulled it off in all the different countries without a trace of empathy and compassion for their impact on humans. Our sight sense can see only holographic form and not the Field which connects holographic form. Therefore we perceive ‘physical’ objects with ‘space’ in between. In fact that ‘space’ is energy/consciousness operating on multiple frequencies. One of them is Wetiko and that connects the Cult psychopaths, those who submit to the psychopaths, and those who serve the psychopaths in the media operations of the world. Wetiko is Gates. Wetiko is the mask-wearing submissive. Wetiko is the fake journalist and ‘fact-checker’. The Wetiko Field is coordinating the whole thing. Psychopaths, gofers, media operatives, ‘anti-hate’ hate groups, ‘fact-checkers’ and submissive people work as one unit *even without human coordination* because they are attached to the *same* Field which is organising it all ([Fig 22](#)). Paul Levy is here describing how Wetiko-possessed people are drawn together and refuse to let any information breach their rigid

perceptions. He was writing long before 'Covid', but I think you will recognise followers of the 'Covid' religion *oh just a little bit*:

People who are channelling the vibratory frequency of wetiko align with each other through psychic resonance to reinforce their unspoken shared agreement so as to uphold their deranged view of reality. Once an unconscious content takes possession of certain individuals, it irresistibly draws them together by mutual attraction and knits them into groups tied together by their shared madness that can easily swell into an avalanche of insanity.

A psychic epidemic is a closed system, which is to say that it is insular and not open to any new information or informing influences from the outside world which contradict its fixed, limited, and limiting perspective.

There we have the Woke mind and the 'Covid' mind. Compatible resonance draws the awakening together, too, which is clearly happening today.



Figure 22: The Wetiko Field from which the Cult pyramid and its personnel are made manifest. (Image by Neil Hague).

Spiritual servitude

Wetiko doesn't care about humans. It's not human; it just possesses humans for its own ends and the effect (depending on the scale of

possession) can be anything from extreme psychopathy to unquestioning obedience. Wetiko's worst nightmare is for human consciousness to expand beyond the simulation. Everything is focussed on stopping that happening through control of information, thus perception, thus frequency. The 'education system', media, science, medicine, academia, are all geared to maintaining humanity in five-sense servitude as is the constant stimulation of low-vibrational mental and emotional states (see 'Covid'). Wetiko seeks to dominate those subconscious spaces between five-sense perception and expanded consciousness where the computer meets the operator. From these subconscious hiding places Wetiko speaks to us to trigger urges and desires that we take to be our own and manipulate us into anything from low-vibrational to psychopathic states. Remember how Islam describes the Jinn as invisible tricksters that 'whisper' and confuse. Wetiko is the origin of the 'trickster god' theme that you find in cultures all over the world. Jinn, like the Archons, are Wetiko which is terrified of humans awakening and reconnecting with our true self for then its energy source has gone. With that the feedback loop breaks between Wetiko and human perception that provides the energetic momentum on which its very existence depends as a force of evil. Humans are both its target and its source of survival, but only if we are operating in low-vibrational states of fear, hate, depression and the background anxiety that most people suffer. We are Wetiko's target because we are its key to survival. It needs us, not the other way round. Paul Levy writes:

A vampire has no intrinsic, independent, substantial existence in its own right; it only exists in relation to us. The pathogenic, vampiric mind-parasite called wetiko is nothing in itself – not being able to exist from its own side – yet it has a 'virtual reality' such that it can potentially destroy our species ...

...The fact that a vampire is not reflected by a mirror can also mean that what we need to see is that there's nothing, no-thing to see, other than ourselves. The fact that wetiko is the expression of something inside of us means that the cure for wetiko is with us as well. The critical issue is finding this cure within us and then putting it into effect.

Evil begets evil because if evil does not constantly expand and find new sources of energetic sustenance its evil, its *distortion*, dies with the assimilation into balance and harmony. Love is the garlic to Wetiko's vampire. Evil, the absence of love, cannot exist in the presence of love. I think I see a way out of here. I have emphasised so many times over the decades that the Archons/Wetiko and their Cult are not all powerful. *They are not*. I don't care how it looks even now *they are not*. I have not called them little boys in short trousers for effect. I have said it because it is true. Wetiko's insatiable desire for power over others is not a sign of its omnipotence, but its insecurity. Paul Levy writes: 'Due to the primal fear which ultimately drives it and which it is driven to cultivate, wetiko's body politic has an intrinsic and insistent need for centralising power and control so as to create imagined safety for itself.' Yeeeeees! Exactly! Why does Wetiko want humans in an ongoing state of fear? Wetiko itself *is* fear and it is petrified of love. As evil is an absence of love, so love is an absence of fear. Love conquers all and *especially* Wetiko which *is* fear. Wetiko brought fear into the world when it wasn't here before. *Fear* was the 'fall', the fall into low-frequency ignorance and illusion – fear is **False Emotion Appearing Real**. The simulation is driven and energised by fear because Wetiko/Yaldabaoth (fear) *are* the simulation. Fear is the absence of love and Wetiko is the absence of love.

Wetiko today

We can now view current events from this level of perspective. The 'Covid' hoax has generated momentous amounts of ongoing fear, anxiety, depression and despair which have empowered Wetiko. No wonder people like Gates have been the instigators when they are Wetiko incarnate and exhibit every trait of Wetiko in the extreme. See how cold and unemotional these people are like Gates and his cronies, how dead of eye they are. That's Wetiko. Sabbatians are Wetiko and everything they control including the World Health Organization, Big Pharma and the 'vaccine' makers, national 'health'

hierarchies, corporate media, Silicon Valley, the banking system, and the United Nations with its planned transformation into world government. All are controlled and possessed by the Wetiko distortion into distorting human society in its image. We are with this knowledge at the gateway to understanding the world. Divisions of race, culture, creed and sexuality are diversions to hide the real division between those possessed and influenced by Wetiko and those that are not. The 'Covid' hoax has brought both clearly into view. Human behaviour is not about race. Tyrants and dictatorships come in all colours and creeds. What unites the US president bombing the innocent and an African tribe committing genocide against another as in Rwanda? What unites them? *Wetiko*. All wars are Wetiko, all genocide is Wetiko, all hunger over centuries in a world of plenty is Wetiko. Children going to bed hungry, including in the West, is Wetiko. Cult-generated Woke racial divisions that focus on the body are designed to obscure the reality that divisions in behaviour are manifestations of mind, not body. Obsession with body identity and group judgement is a means to divert attention from the real source of behaviour – mind and perception. Conflict sown by the Woke both within themselves and with their target groups are Wetiko providing lunch for itself through still more agents of the division, chaos, and fear on which it feeds. The Cult is seeking to assimilate the entirety of humanity and all children and young people into the Wetiko frequency by manipulating them into states of fear and despair. Witness all the suicide and psychological unravelling since the spring of 2020. Wetiko psychopaths want to impose a state of unquestioning obedience to authority which is no more than a conduit for Wetiko to enforce its will and assimilate humanity into itself. It needs us to believe that resistance is futile when it fears resistance and even more so the game-changing non-cooperation with its impositions. It can use violent resistance for its benefit. Violent impositions and violent resistance are *both* Wetiko. The Power of Love with its Power of No will sweep Wetiko from our world. Wetiko and its Cult know that. They just don't want us to know.

AI Wetiko

This brings me to AI or artificial intelligence and something else Wetikos don't want us to know. What is AI *really*? I know about computer code algorithms and AI that learns from data input. These, however, are more diversions, the expeditionary force, for the real AI that they want to connect to the human brain as promoted by Silicon Valley Wetikos like Kurzweil. What is this AI? It is the frequency of *Wetiko*, the frequency of the Archons. The connection of AI to the human brain is the connection of the Wetiko frequency to create a Wetiko hive mind and complete the job of assimilation. The hive mind is planned to be controlled from Israel and China which are both 100 percent owned by Wetiko Sabbatians. The assimilation process has been going on minute by minute in the 'smart' era which fused with the 'Covid' era. We are told that social media is scrambling the minds of the young and changing their personality. This is true, but what is social media? Look more deeply at how it works, how it creates divisions and conflict, the hostility and cruelty, the targeting of people until they are destroyed. That's Wetiko. Social media is manipulated to tune people to the Wetiko frequency with all the emotional exploitation tricks employed by platforms like Facebook and its Wetiko front man, Zuckerberg. Facebook's Instagram announced a new platform for children to overcome a legal bar on them using the main site. This is more Wetiko exploitation and manipulation of kids. Amnesty International likened the plan to foxes offering to guard the henhouse and said it was incompatible with human rights. Since when did Wetiko or Zuckerberg (I repeat myself) care about that? Would Brin and Page at Google, Wojcicki at YouTube, Bezos at Amazon and whoever the hell runs Twitter act as they do if they were not channelling Wetiko? Would those who are developing technologies for no other reason than human control? How about those designing and selling technologies to kill people and Big Pharma drug and 'vaccine' producers who know they will end or devastate lives? Quite a thought for these people to consider is that if you are Wetiko in a human life you are Wetiko on the 'other side' unless your frequency

changes and that can only change by a change of perception which becomes a change of behaviour. Where Gates is going does not bear thinking about although perhaps that's exactly where he wants to go. Either way, that's where he's going. His frequency will make it so.

The frequency lair

I have been saying for a long time that a big part of the addiction to smartphones and devices is that a frequency is coming off them that entraps the mind. People spend ages on their phones and sometimes even a minute or so after they put them down they pick them up again and it all repeats. 'Covid' lockdowns will have increased this addiction a million times for obvious reasons. Addictions to alcohol overindulgence and drugs are another way that Wetiko entraps consciousness to attach to its own. Both are symptoms of low-vibrational psychological distress which alcoholism and drug addiction further compound. Do we think it's really a coincidence that access to them is made so easy while potions that can take people into realms beyond the simulation are banned and illegal? I have explored smartphone addiction in other books, the scale is mind-blowing, and that level of addiction does not come without help. Tech companies that make these phones are Wetiko and they will have no qualms about destroying the minds of children. We are seeing again with these companies the Wetiko perceptual combination of psychopathic enforcers and weak and meek unquestioning compliance by the rank and file.

The global Smart Grid is the Wetiko Grid and it is crucial to complete the Cult endgame. The simulation is radiation and we are being deluged with technological radiation on a devastating scale. Wetiko frauds like Elon Musk serve Cult interests while occasionally criticising them to maintain his street-cred. 5G and other forms of Wi-Fi are being directed at the earth from space on a volume and scale that goes on increasing by the day. Elon Musk's (officially) SpaceX Starlink project is in the process of putting tens of thousands of satellites in low orbit to cover every inch of the planet with 5G and other Wi-Fi to create Kurzweil's global 'cloud' to which the

human mind is planned to be attached very soon. SpaceX has approval to operate 12,000 satellites with more than 1,300 launched at the time of writing and applications filed for 30,000 more. Other operators in the Wi-Fi, 5G, low-orbit satellite market include OneWeb (UK), Telesat (Canada), and AST & Science (US). Musk tells us that AI could be the end of humanity and then launches a company called Neuralink to connect the human brain to computers. Musk's (in theory) Tesla company is building electric cars and the driverless vehicles of the smart control grid. As frauds and bullshitters go Elon Musk in my opinion is Major League.

5G and technological radiation in general are destructive to human health, genetics and psychology and increasing the strength of artificial radiation underpins the five-sense perceptual bubbles which are themselves expressions of radiation or electromagnetism. Freedom activist John Whitehead was so right with his 'databit by databit, we are building our own electronic concentration camps'. The Smart Grid and 5G is a means to control the human mind and infuse perceptual information into The Field to influence anyone in sync with its frequency. You can change perception and behaviour en masse if you can manipulate the population into those levels of frequency and this is happening all around us today. The arrogance of Musk and his fellow Cult operatives knows no bounds in the way that we see with Gates. Musk's satellites are so many in number already they are changing the night sky when viewed from Earth. The astronomy community has complained about this and they have seen nothing yet. Some consequences of Musk's Wetiko hubris include: Radiation; visible pollution of the night sky; interference with astronomy and meteorology; ground and water pollution from intensive use of increasingly many spaceports; accumulating space debris; continual deorbiting and burning up of aging satellites, polluting the atmosphere with toxic dust and smoke; and ever-increasing likelihood of collisions. A collective public open letter of complaint to Musk said:

We are writing to you ... because SpaceX is in process of surrounding the Earth with a network of thousands of satellites whose very purpose is to irradiate every square inch of the

Earth. SpaceX, like everyone else, is treating the radiation as if it were not there. As if the mitochondria in our cells do not depend on electrons moving undisturbed from the food we digest to the oxygen we breathe.

As if our nervous systems and our hearts are not subject to radio frequency interference like any piece of electronic equipment. As if the cancer, diabetes, and heart disease that now afflict a majority of the Earth's population are not metabolic diseases that result from interference with our cellular machinery. As if insects everywhere, and the birds and animals that eat them, are not starving to death as a result.

People like Musk and Gates believe in their limitless Wetiko arrogance that they can do whatever they like to the world because they own it. Consequences for humanity are irrelevant. It's absolutely time that we stopped taking this shit from these self-styled masters of the Earth when you consider where this is going.

Why is the Cult so anti-human?

I hear this question often: Why would they do this when it will affect them, too? Ah, but will it? Who is this *them*? Forget their bodies. They are just vehicles for Wetiko consciousness. When you break it all down to the foundations we are looking at a state of severely distorted consciousness targeting another state of consciousness for assimilation. The rest is detail. The simulation is the fly-trap in which unique sensations of the five senses create a cycle of addiction called reincarnation. Renegade Minds see that everything which happens in our reality is a smaller version of the whole picture in line with the holographic principle. Addiction to the radiation of smart technology is a smaller version of addiction to the whole simulation. Connecting the body/brain to AI is taking that addiction on a giant step further to total ongoing control by assimilating human incarnate consciousness into Wetiko. I have watched during the 'Covid' hoax how many are becoming ever more profoundly attached to Wetiko's perceptual calling cards of aggressive response to any other point of view ('There is no other god but me'), psychopathic lack of compassion and empathy, and servile submission to the narrative and will of authority. Wetiko is the psychopaths *and* subservience to psychopaths. The Cult of Wetiko is

so anti-human because it is *not* human. It embarked on a mission to destroy human by targeting everything that it means to be human and to survive as human. 'Covid' is not the end, just a means to an end. The Cult with its Wetiko consciousness is seeking to change Earth systems, including the atmosphere, to suit them, not humans. The gathering bombardment of 5G alone from ground and space is dramatically changing The Field with which the five senses interact. There is so much more to come if we sit on our hands and hope it will all go away. It is not meant to go away. It is meant to get ever more extreme and we need to face that while we still can – just.

Carbon dioxide is the gas of life. Without that human is over. Kaput, gone, history. No natural world, no human. The Cult has created a cock and bull story about carbon dioxide and climate change to justify its reduction to the point where Gates and the ignoramus Biden 'climate chief' John Kerry want to suck it out of the atmosphere. Kerry wants to do this because his master Gates does. Wetikos have made the gas of life a demon with the usual support from the Wokers of Extinction Rebellion and similar organisations and the bewildered puppet-child that is Greta Thunberg who was put on the world stage by Klaus Schwab and the World Economic Forum. The name Extinction Rebellion is both ironic and as always Wetiko inversion. The gas that we need to survive must be reduced to save us from extinction. The most basic need of human is oxygen and we now have billions walking around in face nappies depriving body and brain of this essential requirement of human existence. More than that 5G at 60 gigahertz interacts with the oxygen molecule to reduce the amount of oxygen the body can absorb into the bloodstream. The obvious knock-on consequences of that for respiratory and cognitive problems and life itself need no further explanation. Psychopaths like Musk are assembling a global system of satellites to deluge the human atmosphere with this insanity. The man should be in jail. Here we have two most basic of human needs, oxygen and carbon dioxide, being dismantled.

Two others, water and food, are getting similar treatment with the United Nations Agendas 21 and 2030 – the Great Reset – planning to

centrally control all water and food supplies. People will not even own rain water that falls on their land. Food is affected at the most basic level by reducing carbon dioxide. We have genetic modification or GMO infiltrating the food chain on a mass scale, pesticides and herbicides polluting the air and destroying the soil. Freshwater fish that provide livelihoods for 60 million people and feed hundreds of millions worldwide are being 'pushed to the brink' according the conservationists while climate change is the only focus. Now we have Gates and Schwab wanting to dispense with current food sources all together and replace them with a synthetic version which the Wetiko Cult would control in terms of production and who eats and who doesn't. We have been on the Totalitarian Tiptoe to this for more than 60 years as food has become ever more processed and full of chemical shite to the point today when it's not natural food at all. As Dr Tom Cowan says: 'If it has a label don't eat it.' Bill Gates is now the biggest owner of farmland in the United States and he does nothing without an ulterior motive involving the Cult. Klaus Schwab wrote: 'To feed the world in the next 50 years we will need to produce as much food as was produced in the last 10,000 years ... food security will only be achieved, however, if regulations on genetically modified foods are adapted to reflect the reality that gene editing offers a precise, efficient and safe method of improving crops.' Liar. People and the world are being targeted with aluminium through vaccines, chemtrails, food, drink cans, and endless other sources when aluminium has been linked to many health issues including dementia which is increasing year after year. Insects, bees and wildlife essential to the food chain are being deleted by pesticides, herbicides and radiation which 5G is dramatically increasing with 6G and 7G to come. The pollinating bee population is being devastated while wildlife including birds, dolphins and whales are having their natural radar blocked by the effects of ever-increasing radiation. In the summer windscreens used to be splattered with insects so numerous were they. It doesn't happen now. Where have they gone?

Synthetic everything

The Cult is introducing genetically-modified versions of trees, plants and insects including a Gates-funded project to unleash hundreds of millions of genetically-modified, lab-altered and patented male mosquitoes to mate with wild mosquitoes and induce genetic flaws that cause them to die out. Clinically-insane Gates-funded Japanese researchers have developed mosquitos that spread vaccine and are dubbed 'flying vaccinators'. Gates is funding the modification of weather patterns in part to sell the myth that this is caused by carbon dioxide and he's funding geoengineering of the skies to change the atmosphere. Some of this came to light with the Gates-backed plan to release tonnes of chalk into the atmosphere to 'deflect the Sun and cool the planet'. Funny how they do this while the heating effect of the Sun is not factored into climate projections focussed on carbon dioxide. The reason is that they want to reduce carbon dioxide (so don't mention the Sun), but at the same time they do want to reduce the impact of the Sun which is so essential to human life and health. I have mentioned the sun-cholesterol-vitamin D connection as they demonise the Sun with warnings about skin cancer (caused by the chemicals in sun cream they tell you to splash on). They come from the other end of the process with statin drugs to reduce cholesterol that turns sunlight into vitamin D. A lack of vitamin D leads to a long list of health effects and how vitamin D levels must have fallen with people confined to their homes over 'Covid'. Gates is funding other forms of geoengineering and most importantly chemtrails which are dropping heavy metals, aluminium and self-replicating nanotechnology onto the Earth which is killing the natural world. See *Everything You Need To Know, But Have Never Been Told* for the detailed background to this.

Every human system is being targeted for deletion by a force that's not human. The Wetiko Cult has embarked on the process of transforming the human body from biological to synthetic biological as I have explained. Biological is being replaced by the artificial and synthetic – Archontic 'countermimicry' – right across human society. The plan eventually is to dispense with the human body altogether

and absorb human consciousness – which it wouldn't really be by then – into cyberspace (the simulation which is Wetiko/Yaldabaoth). Preparations for that are already happening if people would care to look. The alternative media rightly warns about globalism and 'the globalists', but this is far bigger than that and represents the end of the human race as we know it. The 'bad copy' of prime reality that Gnostics describe was a bad copy of harmony, wonder and beauty to start with before Wetiko/Yaldabaoth set out to change the simulated 'copy' into something very different. The process was slow to start with. Entrapped humans in the simulation timeline were not technologically aware and they had to be brought up to intellectual speed while being suppressed spiritually to the point where they could build their own prison while having no idea they were doing so. We have now reached that stage where technological intellect has the potential to destroy us and that's why events are moving so fast. Central American shaman Don Juan Matus said:

Think for a moment, and tell me how you would explain the contradictions between the intelligence of man the engineer and the stupidity of his systems of belief, or the stupidity of his contradictory behaviour. Sorcerers believe that the predators have given us our systems of beliefs, our ideas of good and evil; our social mores. They are the ones who set up our dreams of success or failure. They have given us covetousness, greed, and cowardice. It is the predator who makes us complacent, routinary, and egomaniacal.

In order to keep us obedient and meek and weak, the predators engaged themselves in a stupendous manoeuvre – stupendous, of course, from the point of view of a fighting strategist; a horrendous manoeuvre from the point of those who suffer it. They gave us their mind. The predators' mind is baroque, contradictory, morose, filled with the fear of being discovered any minute now.

For 'predators' see Wetiko, Archons, Yaldabaoth, Jinn, and all the other versions of the same phenomenon in cultures and religions all over the world. The theme is always the same because it's true and it's real. We have reached the point where we have to deal with it. The question is – how?

Don't fight – walk away

I thought I'd use a controversial subheading to get things moving in terms of our response to global fascism. What do you mean 'don't fight'? What do you mean 'walk away'? We've got to fight. We can't walk away. Well, it depends what we mean by fight and walk away. If fighting means physical combat we are playing Wetiko's game and falling for its trap. It wants us to get angry, aggressive, and direct hate and hostility at the enemy we think we must fight. Every war, every battle, every conflict, has been fought with Wetiko leading both sides. It's what it does. Wetiko wants a fight, anywhere, any place. Just hit me, son, so I can hit you back. Wetiko hits Wetiko and Wetiko hits Wetiko in return. I am very forthright as you can see in exposing Wetikos of the Cult, but I don't hate them. I refuse to hate them. It's what they want. What you hate you become. What you *fight* you become. Wokers, 'anti-haters' and 'anti-fascists' prove this every time they reach for their keyboards or don their balaclavas. By walk away I mean to disengage from Wetiko which includes ceasing to cooperate with its tyranny. Paul Levy says of Wetiko:

The way to 'defeat' evil is not to try to destroy it (for then, in playing evil's game, we have already lost), but rather, to find the invulnerable place within ourselves where evil is unable to vanquish us – this is to truly 'win' our battle with evil.

Wetiko is everywhere in human society and it's been on steroids since the 'Covid' hoax. Every shouting match over wearing masks has Wetiko wearing a mask and Wetiko not wearing one. It's an electrical circuit of push and resist, push and resist, with Wetiko pushing *and* resisting. Each polarity is Wetiko empowering itself. Dictionary definitions of 'resist' include 'opposing, refusing to accept or comply with' and the word to focus on is 'opposing'. What form does this take – setting police cars alight or 'refusing to accept or comply with'? The former is Wetiko opposing Wetiko while the other points the way forward. This is the difference between those aggressively demanding that government fascism must be obeyed who stand in stark contrast to the great majority of Pushbackers. We saw this clearly with a march by thousands of Pushbackers against lockdown in London followed days later by a Woker-hijacked

protest in Bristol in which police cars were set on fire. Masks were virtually absent in London and widespread in Bristol. Wetiko wants lockdown on every level of society and infuses its aggression to police it through its unknowing stooges. Lockdown protesters are the ones with the smiling faces and the hugs, The two blatantly obvious states of being – getting more obvious by the day – are the result of Wokers and their like becoming ever more influenced by the simulation Field of Wetiko and Pushbackers ever more influenced by The Field of a far higher vibration beyond the simulation. Wetiko can't invade the heart which is where most lockdown opponents are coming from. It's the heart that allows them to see through the lies to the truth in ways I will be highlighting.

Renegade Minds know that calmness is the place from which wisdom comes. You won't find wisdom in a hissing fit and wisdom is what we need in abundance right now. Calmness is not weakness – you don't have to scream at the top of your voice to be strong. Calmness is indeed a sign of strength. 'No' means I'm not doing it. NOOOO!!! doesn't mean you're not doing it even more. Volume does not advance 'No – I'm not doing it'. You are just not doing it. Wetiko possessed and influenced don't know how to deal with that. Wetiko wants a fight and we should not give it one. What it needs more than anything is our *cooperation* and we should not give that either. Mass rallies and marches are great in that they are a visual representation of feeling, but if it ends there they are irrelevant. You demand that Wetikos act differently? Well, they're not going to are they? They are Wetikos. We don't need to waste our time demanding that something doesn't happen when that will make no difference. We need to delete the means that *allows* it to happen. This, invariably, is our cooperation. You can demand a child stop firing a peashooter at the dog or you can refuse to buy the peashooter. If you provide the means you are cooperating with the dog being smacked on the nose with a pea. How can the authorities enforce mask-wearing if millions in a country refuse? What if the 74 million Pushbackers that voted for Trump in 2020 refused to wear masks, close their businesses or stay in their homes. It would be unenforceable. The

few control the many through the compliance of the many and that's always been the dynamic be it 'Covid' regulations or the Roman Empire. I know people can find it intimidating to say no to authority or stand out in a crowd for being the only one with a face on display; but it has to be done or it's over. I hope I've made clear in this book that where this is going will be far more intimidating than standing up now and saying 'No' – I will not cooperate with my own enslavement and that of my children. There might be consequences for some initially, although not so if enough do the same. The question that must be addressed is what is going to happen if we don't? It is time to be strong and unyieldingly so. No means no. Not here and there, but *everywhere* and *always*. I have refused to wear a mask and obey all the other nonsense. I will not comply with tyranny. I repeat: Fascism is not imposed by fascists – there are never enough of them. Fascism is imposed by the population acquiescing to fascism. *I will not do it*. I will die first, or my body will. Living meekly under fascism is a form of death anyway, the death of the spirit that Martin Luther King described.

Making things happen

We must not despair. This is not over till it's over and it's far from that. The 'fat lady' must refuse to sing. The longer the 'Covid' hoax has dragged on and impacted on more lives we have seen an awakening of phenomenal numbers of people worldwide to the realisation that what they have believed all their lives is not how the world really is. Research published by the system-serving University of Bristol and King's College London in February, 2021, concluded: 'One in every 11 people in Britain say they trust David Icke's take on the coronavirus pandemic.' It will be more by now and we have gathering numbers to build on. We must urgently progress from seeing the scam to ceasing to cooperate with it. Prominent German lawyer Reiner Fuellmich, also licenced to practice law in America, is doing a magnificent job taking the legal route to bring the psychopaths to justice through a second Nuremberg tribunal for crimes against humanity. Fuellmich has an impressive record of

beating the elite in court and he formed the German Corona Investigative Committee to pursue civil charges against the main perpetrators with a view to triggering criminal charges. Most importantly he has grasped the foundation of the hoax – the PCR test not testing for the ‘virus’ – and Christian Drosten is therefore on his charge sheet along with Gates frontman Tedros at the World Health Organization. Major players must not be allowed to inflict their horrors on the human race without being brought to book. A life sentence must follow for Bill Gates and the rest of them. A group of researchers has also indicted the government of Norway for crimes against humanity with copies sent to the police and the International Criminal Court. The lawsuit cites participation in an internationally-planned false pandemic and violation of international law and human rights, the European Commission’s definition of human rights by coercive rules, Nuremberg and Hague rules on fundamental human rights, and the Norwegian constitution. We must take the initiative from hereon and not just complain, protest and react.

There are practical ways to support vital mass non-cooperation. Organising in numbers is one. Lockdown marches in London in the spring in 2021 were mass non-cooperation that the authorities could not stop. There were too many people. Hundreds of thousands walked the London streets in the centre of the road for mile after mile while the Face-Nappies could only look on. They were determined, but calm, and just *did it* with no histrionics and lots of smiles. The police were impotent. Others are organising group shopping without masks for mutual support and imagine if that was happening all over. Policing it would be impossible. If the store refuses to serve people in these circumstances they would be faced with a long line of trolleys full of goods standing on their own and everything would have to be returned to the shelves. How would they cope with that if it kept happening? I am talking here about moving on from complaining to being pro-active; from watching things happen to making things happen. I include in this our relationship with the police. The behaviour of many Face-Nappies

has been disgraceful and anyone who thinks they would never find concentration camp guards in the 'enlightened' modern era have had that myth busted big-time. The period and setting may change – Wetikos never do. I watched film footage from a London march in which a police thug viciously kicked a protestor on the floor who had done nothing. His fellow Face-Nappies stood in a ring protecting him. What he did was a criminal assault and with a crowd far outnumbering the police this can no longer be allowed to happen unchallenged. I get it when people chant 'shame on you' in these circumstances, but that is no longer enough. They *have* no shame those who do this. Crowds needs to start making a citizen's arrest of the police who commit criminal offences and brutally attack innocent people and defenceless women. A citizen's arrest can be made under section 24A of the UK Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act of 1984 and you will find something similar in other countries. I prefer to call it a Common Law arrest rather than citizen's for reasons I will come to shortly. Anyone can arrest a person committing an indictable offence or if they have reasonable grounds to suspect they are committing an indictable offence. On both counts the attack by the police thug would have fallen into this category. A citizen's arrest can be made to stop someone:

- Causing physical injury to himself or any other person
- Suffering physical injury
- Causing loss of or damage to property
- Making off before a constable can assume responsibility for him

A citizen's arrest may also be made to prevent a breach of the peace under Common Law and if they believe a breach of the peace will happen or anything related to harm likely to be done or already done in their presence. This is the way to go I think – the Common Law version. If police know that the crowd and members of the public will no longer be standing and watching while they commit

their thuggery and crimes they will think twice about acting like Brownshirts and Blackshirts.

Common Law – common sense

Mention of Common Law is very important. Most people think the law is the law as in one law. This is not the case. There are two bodies of law, Common Law and Statute Law, and they are not the same. Common Law is founded on the simple premise of do no harm. It does not recognise victimless crimes in which no harm is done while Statute Law does. There is a Statute Law against almost everything. So what is Statute Law? Amazingly it's the law of the *sea* that was brought ashore by the Cult to override the law of the land which is Common Law. They had no right to do this and as always they did it anyway. They had to. They could not impose their will on the people through Common Law which only applies to do no harm. How could you stitch up the fine detail of people's lives with that? Instead they took the law of the sea, or Admiralty Law, and applied it to the population. Statute Law refers to all the laws spewing out of governments and their agencies including all the fascist laws and regulations relating to 'Covid'. The key point to make is that Statute Law is *contract law*. It only applies between *contracting* corporations. Most police officers don't even know this. They have to be kept in the dark, too. Long ago when merchants and their sailing ships began to trade with different countries a contractual law was developed called Admiralty Law and other names. Again it only applied to *contracts* agreed between *corporate* entities. If there is no agreed contract the law of the sea had no jurisdiction *and that still applies to its new alias of Statute Law*. The problem for the Cult when the law of the sea was brought ashore was an obvious one. People were not corporations and neither were government entities. To overcome the latter they made governments and all associated organisations corporations. All the institutions are *private corporations* and I mean governments and their agencies, local councils, police, courts, military, US states, the whole lot. Go to the

Dun and Bradstreet corporate listings website for confirmation that they are all corporations. You are arrested by a private corporation called the police by someone who is really a private security guard and they take you to court which is another private corporation. Neither have jurisdiction over you unless you consent and *contract* with them. This is why you hear the mantra about law enforcement policing by *consent* of the people. In truth the people 'consent' only in theory through monumental trickery.

Okay, the Cult overcame the corporate law problem by making governments and institutions corporate entities; but what about people? They are not corporations are they? Ah ... well in a sense, and *only* a sense, they are. Not people exactly – the illusion of people. The Cult creates a corporation in the name of everyone at the time that their birth certificate is issued. Note birth/ *berth* certificate and when you go to court under the law of the sea on land you stand in a *dock*. These are throwbacks to the origin. My Common Law name is David Vaughan Icke. The name of the corporation created by the government when I was born is called Mr David Vaughan Icke usually written in capitals as MR DAVID VAUGHAN ICKE. That is not me, the living, breathing man. It is a fictitious corporate entity. The trick is to make you think that David Vaughan Icke and MR DAVID VAUGHAN ICKE are the same thing. *They are not*. When police charge you and take you to court they are prosecuting the corporate entity and not the living, breathing, man or woman. They have to trick you into identifying as the corporate entity and contracting with them. Otherwise they have no jurisdiction. They do this through a language known as legalese. Lawful and legal are not the same either. Lawful relates to Common Law and legal relates to Statute Law. Legalese is the language of Statue Law which uses terms that mean one thing to the public and another in legalese. Notice that when a police officer tells someone why they are being charged he or she will say at the end: 'Do you understand?' To the public that means 'Do you comprehend?' In legalese it means 'Do you stand under me?' Do you stand under my authority? If you say

yes to the question you are unknowingly agreeing to give them jurisdiction over you in a contract between two corporate entities.

This is a confidence trick in every way. Contracts have to be agreed between informed parties and if you don't know that David Vaughan Icke is agreeing to be the corporation MR DAVID VAUGHAN ICKE you cannot knowingly agree to contract. They are deceiving you and another way they do this is to ask for proof of identity. You usually show them a driving licence or other document on which your corporate name is written. In doing so you are accepting that you are that corporate entity when you are not. Referring to yourself as a 'person' or 'citizen' is also identifying with your corporate fiction which is why I made the Common Law point about the citizen's arrest. If you are approached by a police officer you identify yourself immediately as a living, breathing, man or woman and say 'I do not consent, I do not contract with you and I do not understand' or stand under their authority. I have a Common Law birth certificate as a living man and these are available at no charge from commonlawcourt.com. Businesses registered under the Statute Law system means that its laws apply. There are, however, ways to run a business under Common Law. Remember all 'Covid' laws and regulations are Statute Law – the law of *contracts* and you do not have to contract. This doesn't mean that you can kill someone and get away with it. Common Law says do no harm and that applies to physical harm, financial harm etc. Police are employees of private corporations and there needs to be a new system of non-corporate Common Law constables operating outside the Statute Law system. If you go to davidicke.com and put Common Law into the search engine you will find videos that explain Common Law in much greater detail. It is definitely a road we should walk.

With all my heart

I have heard people say that we are in a spiritual war. I don't like the term 'war' with its Wetiko dynamic, but I know what they mean. Sweep aside all the bodily forms and we are in a situation in which two states of consciousness are seeking very different realities.

Wetiko wants upheaval, chaos, fear, suffering, conflict and control. The other wants love, peace, harmony, fairness and freedom. That's where we are. We should not fall for the idea that Wetiko is all-powerful and there's nothing we can do. Wetiko is not all-powerful. It's a joke, pathetic. It doesn't have to be, but it has made that choice for now. A handful of times over the years when I have felt the presence of its frequency I have allowed it to attach briefly so I could consciously observe its nature. The experience is not pleasant, the energy is heavy and dark, but the ease with which you can kick it back out the door shows that its real power is in persuading us that it has power. It's all a con. Wetiko is a con. It's a trickster and not a power that can control us if we unleash our own. The con is founded on manipulating humanity to give its power to Wetiko which recycles it back to present the illusion that it has power when its power is *ours* that we gave away. This happens on an energetic level and plays out in the world of the seen as humanity giving its power to Wetiko authority which uses that power to control the population when the power is only the power the population has handed over. How could it be any other way for billions to be controlled by a relative few? I have had experiences with people possessed by Wetiko and again you can kick its arse if you do it with an open heart. Oh yes – the *heart* which can transform the world of perceived 'matter'.

We are receiver-transmitters and processors of information, but what information and where from? Information is processed into perception in three main areas – the brain, the heart and the belly. These relate to thinking, knowing, and emotion. Wetiko wants us to be head and belly people which means we think within the confines of the Matrix simulation and low-vibrational emotional reaction scrambles balance and perception. A few minutes on social media and you see how emotion is the dominant force. Woke is all emotion and is therefore thought-free and fact-free. Our heart is something different. It *knows* while the head *thinks* and has to try to work it out because it doesn't know. The human energy field has seven prime vortexes which connect us with wider reality ([Fig 23](#)). Chakra means

‘wheels of light’ in the Sanskrit language of ancient India. The main ones are: The crown chakra on top of the head; brow (or ‘third eye’) chakra in the centre of the forehead; throat chakra; heart chakra in the centre of the chest; solar plexus chakra below the sternum; sacral chakra beneath the navel; and base chakra at the bottom of the spine. Each one has a particular function or functions. We feel anxiety and nervousness in the belly where the sacral chakra is located and this processes emotion that can affect the colon to give people ‘the shits’ or make them ‘shit scared’ when they are nervous. Chakras all play an important role, but the Mr and Mrs Big is the heart chakra which sits at the centre of the seven, above the chakras that connect us to the ‘physical’ and below those that connect with higher realms (or at least should). Here in the heart chakra we feel love, empathy and compassion – ‘My heart goes out to you’. Those with closed hearts become literally ‘heart-less’ in their attitudes and behaviour (see Bill Gates). Native Americans portrayed Wetiko with what Paul Levy calls a ‘frigid, icy heart, devoid of mercy’ (see Bill Gates).



Figure 23: The chakra system which interpenetrates the human energy field. The heart chakra is the governor – or should be.

Wetiko trembles at the thought of heart energy which it cannot infiltrate. The frequency is too high. What it seeks to do instead is close the heart chakra vortex to block its perceptual and energetic influence. Psychopaths have ‘hearts of stone’ and emotionally-damaged people have ‘heartache’ and ‘broken hearts’. The astonishing amount of heart disease is related to heart chakra

disruption with its fundamental connection to the 'physical' heart. Dr Tom Cowan has written an outstanding book challenging the belief that the heart is a pump and making the connection between the 'physical' and spiritual heart. Rudolph Steiner who was way ahead of his time said the same about the fallacy that the heart is a pump. *What?* The heart is not a pump? That's crazy, right? Everybody knows that. Read Cowan's *Human Heart, Cosmic Heart* and you will realise that the very idea of the heart as a pump is ridiculous when you see the evidence. How does blood in the feet so far from the heart get pumped horizontally up the body by the heart?? Cowan explains in the book the real reason why blood moves as it does. Our 'physical' heart is used to symbolise love when the source is really the heart vortex or spiritual heart which is our most powerful energetic connection to 'out there' expanded consciousness. That's why we feel *knowing* – intuitive knowing – in the centre of the chest. Knowing doesn't come from a process of thoughts leading to a conclusion. It is there in an instant all in one go. Our heart knows because of its connection to levels of awareness that *do* know. This is the meaning and source of intuition – intuitive *knowing*.

For the last more than 30 years of uncovering the global game and the nature of reality my heart has been my constant antenna for truth and accuracy. An American intelligence insider once said that I had quoted a disinformant in one of my books and yet I had only quoted the part that was true. He asked: 'How do you do that?' By using my heart antenna was the answer and anyone can do it. Heart-centred is how we are meant to be. With a closed heart chakra we withdraw into a closed mind and the bubble of five-sense reality. If you take a moment to focus your attention on the centre of your chest, picture a spinning wheel of light and see it opening and expanding. You will feel it happening, too, and perceptions of the heart like joy and love as the heart impacts on the mind as they interact. The more the chakra opens the more you will feel expressions of heart consciousness and as the process continues, and becomes part of you, insights and knowings will follow. An open

heart is connected to that level of awareness that knows all is *One*. You will see from its perspective that the fault-lines that divide us are only illusions to control us. An open heart does not process the illusions of race, creed and sexuality except as brief experiences for a consciousness that is all. Our heart does not see division, only unity (Figs 24 and 25). There's something else, too. Our hearts love to laugh. Mark Twain's quote that says 'The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter' is really a reference to the heart which loves to laugh with the joy of knowing the true nature of infinite reality and that all the madness of human society is an illusion of the mind. Twain also said: 'Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand.' This is so true of Wetiko and the Cult. Their insecurity demands that they be taken seriously and their power and authority acknowledged and feared. We should do nothing of the sort. We should not get aggressive or fearful which their insecurity so desires. We should laugh in their face. Even in their no-face as police come over in their face-nappies and expect to be taken seriously. They don't take themselves seriously looking like that so why should we? Laugh in the face of intimidation. Laugh in the face of tyranny. You will see by its reaction that you have pressed all of its buttons. Wetiko does not know what to do in the face of laughter or when its targets refuse to concede their joy to fear. We have seen many examples during the 'Covid' hoax when people have expressed their energetic power and the string puppets of Wetiko retreat with their tail limp between their knees. Laugh – the world is bloody mad after all and if it's a choice between laughter and tears I know which way I'm going.



Figure 24: Head consciousness without the heart sees division and everything apart from everything else.



Figure 25: Heart consciousness sees everything as One.

'Vaccines' and the soul

The foundation of Wetiko/Archon control of humans is the separation of incarnate five-sense mind from the infinite 'I' and closing the heart chakra where the True 'I' lives during a human life. The goal has been to achieve complete separation in both cases. I was interested therefore to read an account by a French energetic healer of what she said she experienced with a patient who had been given the 'Covid' vaccine. Genuine energy healers can sense information and consciousness fields at different levels of being which are referred to as 'subtle bodies'. She described treating the patient who later returned after having, without the healer's knowledge, two doses of the 'Covid vaccine'. The healer said:

I noticed immediately the change, very heavy energy emanating from [the] subtle bodies. The scariest thing was when I was working on the heart chakra, I connected with her soul: it was detached from the physical body, it had no contact and it was, as if it was floating in a state of total confusion: a damage to the consciousness that loses contact with the physical body, i.e. with our biological machine, there is no longer any communication between them.

I continued the treatment by sending light to the heart chakra, the soul of the person, but it seemed that the soul could no longer receive any light, frequency or energy. It was a very powerful experience for me. Then I understood that this substance is indeed used to detach consciousness so that this consciousness can no longer interact through this body that it possesses in life, where there is no longer any contact, no frequency, no light, no more energetic balance or mind.

This would create a human that is rudderless and at the extreme almost zombie-like operating with a fractional state of consciousness at the mercy of Wetiko. I was especially intrigued by what the healer said in the light of the prediction by the highly-informed Rudolf Steiner more than a hundred years ago. He said:

In the future, we will eliminate the soul with medicine. Under the pretext of a 'healthy point of view', there will be a vaccine by which the human body will be treated as soon as possible directly at birth, so that the human being cannot develop the thought of the existence of soul and Spirit. To materialistic doctors will be entrusted the task of removing the soul of humanity.

As today, people are vaccinated against this disease or that disease, so in the future, children will be vaccinated with a substance that can be produced precisely in such a way that people, thanks to this vaccination, will be immune to being subjected to the 'madness' of spiritual life. He would be extremely smart, but he would not develop a conscience, and that is the true goal of some materialistic circles.

Steiner said the vaccine would detach the physical body from the etheric body (subtle bodies) and 'once the etheric body is detached the relationship between the universe and the etheric body would become extremely unstable, and man would become an automaton'. He said 'the physical body of man must be polished on this Earth by spiritual will – so the vaccine becomes a kind of arymanique (Wetiko) force' and 'man can no longer get rid of a given materialistic feeling'. Humans would then, he said, become 'materialistic of constitution and can no longer rise to the spiritual'. I have been writing for years about DNA being a receiver-transmitter of information that connects us to other levels of reality and these 'vaccines' changing DNA can be likened to changing an antenna and what it can transmit and receive. Such a disconnection would clearly lead to changes in personality and perception. Steiner further predicted the arrival of AI. Big Pharma 'Covid vaccine' makers, expressions of Wetiko, are testing their DNA-manipulating evil on children as I write with a view to giving the 'vaccine' to babies. If it's a soul-body disconnecter – and I say that it is or can be – every child would be disconnected from 'soul' at birth and the 'vaccine' would create a closed system in which spiritual guidance from the greater self would play no part. This has been the ambition of Wetiko all

along. A Pentagon video from 2005 was leaked of a presentation explaining the development of vaccines to change behaviour by their effect on the brain. Those that believe this is not happening with the 'Covid' genetically-modifying procedure masquerading as a 'vaccine' should make an urgent appointment with Naivety Anonymous. Klaus Schwab wrote in 2018:

Neurotechnologies enable us to better influence consciousness and thought and to understand many activities of the brain. They include decoding what we are thinking in fine levels of detail through new chemicals and interventions that can influence our brains to correct for errors or enhance functionality.

The plan is clear and only the heart can stop it. With every heart that opens, every mind that awakens, Wetiko is weakened. Heart and love are far more powerful than head and hate and so nothing like a majority is needed to turn this around.

Beyond the Phantom

Our heart is the prime target of Wetiko and so it must be the answer to Wetiko. We *are* our heart which is part of one heart, the infinite heart. Our heart is where the true self lives in a human life behind firewalls of five-sense illusion when an imposter takes its place – *Phantom Self*; but our heart waits patiently to be set free any time we choose to see beyond the Phantom, beyond Wetiko. A Wetikoed Phantom Self can wreak mass death and destruction while the love of forever is locked away in its heart. The time is here to unleash its power and let it sweep away the fear and despair that is Wetiko. Heart consciousness does not seek manipulated, censored, advantage for its belief or religion, its activism and desires. As an expression of the One it treats all as One with the same rights to freedom and opinion. Our heart demands fairness for itself no more than for others. From this unity of heart we can come together in mutual support and transform this Wetikoed world into what reality is meant to be – a place of love, joy, happiness, fairness, justice and freedom. Wetiko has another agenda and that's why the world is as

it is, but enough of this nonsense. Wetiko can't stay where hearts are open and it works so hard to keep them closed. Fear is its currency and its food source and love in its true sense has no fear. Why would love have fear when it knows it is *All That Is, Has Been, And Ever Can Be* on an eternal exploration of all possibility? Love in this true sense is not the physical attraction that passes for love. This can be an expression of it, yes, but Infinite Love, a love without condition, goes far deeper to the core of all being. It *is* the core of all being. Infinite reality was born from love beyond the illusions of the simulation. Love infinitely expressed is the knowing that all is One and the swiftly-passing experience of separation is a temporary hallucination. You cannot disconnect from Oneness; you can only *perceive* that you have and withdraw from its influence. This is the most important of all perception trickery by the mind parasite that is Wetiko and the foundation of all its potential for manipulation.

If we open our hearts, open the sluice gates of the mind, and redefine self-identity amazing things start to happen. Consciousness expands or contracts in accordance with self-identity. When true self is recognised as infinite awareness and label self – Phantom Self – is seen as only a series of brief experiences life is transformed. Consciousness expands to the extent that self-identity expands and everything changes. You see unity, not division, the picture, not the pixels. From this we can play the long game. No more is an experience something in and of itself, but a fleeting moment in the eternity of forever. Suddenly people in uniform and dark suits are no longer intimidating. Doing what your heart knows to be right is no longer intimidating and consequences for those actions take on the same nature of a brief experience that passes in the blink of an infinite eye. Intimidation is all in the mind. Beyond the mind there is no intimidation.

An open heart does not consider consequences for what it knows to be right. To do so would be to consider not doing what it knows to be right and for a heart in its power that is never an option. The Renegade Mind is really the Renegade Heart. Consideration of consequences will always provide a getaway car for the mind and

the heart doesn't want one. What is right in the light of what we face today is to stop cooperating with Wetiko in all its forms and to do it without fear or compromise. You cannot compromise with tyranny when tyranny always demands more until it has everything. Life is your perception and you are your destiny. Change your perception and you change your life. Change collective perception and we change the world.

Come on people ... One human family, One heart, One goal ...
FREEEEEEEDOM!

We must settle for nothing less.

Postscript

The big scare story as the book goes to press is the 'Indian' variant and the world is being deluged with propaganda about the 'Covid catastrophe' in India which mirrors in its lies and misrepresentations what happened in Italy before the first lockdown in 2020.

The *New York Post* published a picture of someone who had 'collapsed in the street from Covid' in India in April, 2021, which was actually taken during a gas leak in May, 2020. Same old, same old. Media articles in mid-February were asking why India had been so untouched by 'Covid' and then as their vaccine rollout gathered pace the alleged 'cases' began to rapidly increase. Indian 'Covid vaccine' maker Bharat Biotech was funded into existence by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (the pair announced their divorce in May, 2021, which is a pity because they so deserve each other). The Indian 'Covid crisis' was ramped up by the media to terrify the world and prepare people for submission to still more restrictions. The scam that worked the first time was being repeated only with far more people seeing through the deceit. Davidicke.com and Ickonic.com have sought to tell the true story of what is happening by talking to people living through the Indian nightmare which has nothing to do with 'Covid'. We posted a letter from 'Alisha' in Pune who told a very different story to government and media mendacity. She said scenes of dying people and overwhelmed hospitals were designed to hide what was really happening – genocide and starvation. Alisha said that millions had already died of starvation during the ongoing lockdowns while government and media were lying and making it look like the 'virus':

Restaurants, shops, gyms, theatres, basically everything is shut. The cities are ghost towns. Even so-called 'essential' businesses are only open till 11am in the morning. You basically have just an hour to buy food and then your time is up.

Inter-state travel and even inter-district travel is banned. The cops wait at all major crossroads to question why you are traveling outdoors or to fine you if you are not wearing a mask.

The medical community here is also complicit in genocide, lying about hospitals being full and turning away people with genuine illnesses, who need immediate care. They have even created a shortage of oxygen cylinders.

This is the classic Cult modus operandi played out in every country. Alisha said that people who would not have a PCR test not testing for the 'virus' were being denied hospital treatment. She said the people hit hardest were migrant workers and those in rural areas. Most businesses employed migrant workers and with everything closed there were no jobs, no income and no food. As a result millions were dying of starvation or malnutrition. All this was happening under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a 100-percent asset of the Cult, and it emphasises yet again the scale of pure anti-human evil we are dealing with. Australia banned its people from returning home from India with penalties for trying to do so of up to five years in jail and a fine of £37,000. The manufactured 'Covid' crisis in India was being prepared to justify further fascism in the West. Obvious connections could be seen between the Indian 'vaccine' programme and increased 'cases' and this became a common theme. The Seychelles, the most per capita 'Covid vaccinated' population in the world, went back into lockdown after a 'surge of cases'.

Long ago the truly evil Monsanto agricultural biotechnology corporation with its big connections to Bill Gates devastated Indian farming with genetically-modified crops. Human rights activist Gurcharan Singh highlighted the efforts by the Indian government to complete the job by destroying the food supply to hundreds of millions with 'Covid' lockdowns. He said that 415 million people at the bottom of the disgusting caste system (still going whatever they say) were below the poverty line and struggled to feed themselves every year. Now the government was imposing lockdown at just the

time to destroy the harvest. This deliberate policy was leading to mass starvation. People may reel back at the suggestion that a government would do that, but Wetiko-controlled 'leaders' are capable of any level of evil. In fact what is described in India is in the process of being instigated worldwide. The food chain and food supply are being targeted at every level to cause world hunger and thus control. Bill Gates is not the biggest owner of farmland in America for no reason and destroying access to food aids both the depopulation agenda and the plan for synthetic 'food' already being funded into existence by Gates. Add to this the coming hyper-inflation from the suicidal creation of fake 'money' in response to 'Covid' and the breakdown of container shipping systems and you have a cocktail that can only lead one way and is meant to. The Cult plan is to crash the entire system to 'build back better' with the Great Reset.

'Vaccine' transmission

Reports from all over the world continue to emerge of women suffering menstrual and fertility problems after having the fake 'vaccine' and of the non-'vaccinated' having similar problems when interacting with the 'vaccinated'. There are far too many for 'coincidence' to be credible. We've had menopausal women getting periods, others having periods stop or not stopping for weeks, passing clots, sometimes the lining of the uterus, breast irregularities, and miscarriages (which increased by 400 percent in parts of the United States). Non-'vaccinated' men and children have suffered blood clots and nose bleeding after interaction with the 'vaccinated'. Babies have died from the effects of breast milk from a 'vaccinated' mother. Awake doctors – the small minority – speculated on the cause of non-'vaccinated' suffering the same effects as the 'vaccinated'. Was it nanotechnology in the synthetic substance transmitting frequencies or was it a straight chemical bioweapon that was being transmitted between people? I am not saying that some kind of chemical transmission is not one possible answer, but the foundation of all that the Cult does is frequency and

this is fertile ground for understanding how transmission can happen. American doctor Carrie Madej, an internal medicine physician and osteopath, has been practicing for the last 20 years, teaching medical students, and she says attending different meetings where the agenda for humanity was discussed. Madej, who operates out of Georgia, did not dismiss other possible forms of transmission, but she focused on frequency in search of an explanation for transmission. She said the Moderna and Pfizer 'vaccines' contained nano-lipid particles as a key component. This was a brand new technology never before used on humanity. 'They're using a nanotechnology which is pretty much little tiny computer bits ... nanobots or hydrogel.' Inside the 'vaccines' was 'this sci-fi kind of substance' which suppressed immune checkpoints to get into the cell. I referred to this earlier as the 'Trojan horse' technique that tricks the cell into opening a gateway for the self-replicating synthetic material and while the immune system is artificially suppressed the body has no defences. Madej said the substance served many purposes including an on-demand ability to 'deliver the payload' and using the nano 'computer bits' as biosensors in the body. 'It actually has the ability to accumulate data from your body, like your breathing, your respiration, thoughts, emotions, all kinds of things.'

She said the technology obviously has the ability to operate through Wi-Fi and transmit and receive energy, messages, frequencies or impulses. 'Just imagine you're getting this new substance in you and it can react to things all around you, the 5G, your smart device, your phones.' We had something completely foreign in the human body that had never been launched large scale at a time when we were seeing 5G going into schools and hospitals (plus the Musk satellites) and she believed the 'vaccine' transmission had something to do with this: '... if these people have this inside of them ... it can act like an antenna and actually transmit it outwardly as well.' The synthetic substance produced its own voltage and so it could have that kind of effect. This fits with my own contention that the nano receiver-transmitters are designed to connect people to the

Smart Grid and break the receiver-transmitter connection to expanded consciousness. That would explain the French energy healer's experience of the disconnection of body from 'soul' with those who have had the 'vaccine'. The nanobots, self-replicating inside the body, would also transmit the synthetic frequency which could be picked up through close interaction by those who have not been 'vaccinated'. Madej speculated that perhaps it was 5G and increased levels of other radiation that was causing the symptoms directly although interestingly she said that non-'vaccinated' patients had shown improvement when they were away from the 'vaccinated' person they had interacted with. It must be remembered that you can control frequency and energy with your mind and you can consciously create energetic barriers or bubbles with the mind to stop damaging frequencies from penetrating your field. American paediatrician Dr Larry Palevsky said the 'vaccine' was not a 'vaccine' and was never designed to protect from a 'viral' infection. He called it 'a massive, brilliant propaganda of genocide' because they didn't have to inject everyone to get the result they wanted. He said the content of the jabs was able to infuse any material into the brain, heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, sperm and female productive system. 'This is genocide; this is a weapon of mass destruction.' At the same time American colleges were banning students from attending if they didn't have this life-changing and potentially life-ending 'vaccine'. Class action lawsuits must follow when the consequences of this college fascism come to light. As the book was going to press came reports about fertility effects on sperm in 'vaccinated' men which would absolutely fit with what I have been saying and hospitals continued to fill with 'vaccine' reactions. Another question is what about transmission via blood transfusions? The NHS has extended blood donation restrictions from seven days after a 'Covid vaccination' to 28 days after even a sore arm reaction.

I said in the spring of 2020 that the then touted 'Covid vaccine' would be ongoing each year like the flu jab. A year later Pfizer CEO, the appalling Albert Bourla, said people would 'likely' need a 'booster dose' of the 'vaccine' within 12 months of getting 'fully

vaccinated' and then a yearly shot. 'Variants will play a key role', he said confirming the point. Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky also took time out from his 'vaccine' disaster to say that people may need to be vaccinated against 'Covid-19' each year. UK Health Secretary, the psychopath Matt Hancock, said additional 'boosters' would be available in the autumn of 2021. This is the trap of the 'vaccine passport'. The public will have to accept every last 'vaccine' they introduce, including for the fake 'variants', or it would cease to be valid. The only other way in some cases would be continuous testing with a test not testing for the 'virus' and what is on the swabs constantly pushed up your nose towards the brain every time?

'Vaccines' changing behaviour

I mentioned in the body of the book how I believed we would see gathering behaviour changes in the 'vaccinated' and I am already hearing such comments from the non-'vaccinated' describing behaviour changes in friends, loved ones and work colleagues. This will only increase as the self-replicating synthetic material and nanoparticles expand in body and brain. An article in the *Guardian* in 2016 detailed research at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville which developed a new method for controlling brain circuits associated with complex animal behaviour. The method, dubbed 'magnetogenetics', involves genetically-engineering a protein called ferritin, which stores and releases iron, to create a magnetised substance – 'Magneto' – that can activate specific groups of nerve cells from a distance. This is claimed to be an advance on other methods of brain activity manipulation known as optogenetics and chemogenetics (the Cult has been developing methods of brain control for a long time). The ferritin technique is said to be non-invasive and able to activate neurons 'rapidly and reversibly'. In other words, human thought and perception. The article said that earlier studies revealed how nerve cell proteins 'activated by heat and mechanical pressure can be genetically engineered so that they become sensitive to radio waves and magnetic fields, by attaching them to an iron-storing protein called ferritin, or to inorganic

paramagnetic particles'. Sensitive to radio waves and magnetic fields? You mean like 5G, 6G and 7G? This is the human-AI Smart Grid hive mind we are talking about. The *Guardian* article said:

... the researchers injected Magneto into the striatum of freely behaving mice, a deep brain structure containing dopamine-producing neurons that are involved in reward and motivation, and then placed the animals into an apparatus split into magnetised and non-magnetised sections.

Mice expressing Magneto spent far more time in the magnetised areas than mice that did not, because activation of the protein caused the striatal neurons expressing it to release dopamine, so that the mice found being in those areas rewarding. This shows that Magneto can remotely control the firing of neurons deep within the brain, and also control complex behaviours.

Make no mistake this basic methodology will be part of the 'Covid vaccine' cocktail and using magnetics to change brain function through electromagnetic field frequency activation. The Pentagon is developing a 'Covid vaccine' using ferritin. Magnetism would explain changes in behaviour and why videos are appearing across the Internet as I write showing how magnets stick to the skin at the point of the 'vaccine' shot. Once people take these 'vaccines' anything becomes possible in terms of brain function and illness which will be blamed on 'Covid-19' and 'variants'. Magnetic field manipulation would further explain why the non-'vaccinated' are reporting the same symptoms as the 'vaccinated' they interact with and why those symptoms are reported to decrease when not in their company. Interestingly 'Magneto', a 'mutant', is a character in the Marvel Comic *X-Men* stories with the ability to manipulate magnetic fields and he believes that mutants should fight back against their human oppressors by any means necessary. The character was born Erik Lehnsherr to a Jewish family in Germany.

Cult-controlled courts

The European Court of Human Rights opened the door for mandatory 'Covid-19 vaccines' across the continent when it ruled in a Czech Republic dispute over childhood immunisation that legally

enforced vaccination could be 'necessary in a democratic society'. The 17 judges decided that compulsory vaccinations did not breach human rights law. On the face of it the judgement was so inverted you gasp for air. If not having a vaccine infused into your body is not a human right then what is? Ah, but they said human rights law which has been specifically written to delete all human rights at the behest of the state (the Cult). Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights relates to the right to a private life. The crucial word here is '*except*':

There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right EXCEPT such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic wellbeing of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others [My emphasis].

No interference *except* in accordance with the law means there *are* no 'human rights' *except* what EU governments decide you can have at their behest. 'As is necessary in a democratic society' explains that reference in the judgement and 'in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others' gives the EU a coach and horses to ride through 'human rights' and scatter them in all directions. The judiciary is not a check and balance on government extremism; it is a vehicle to enforce it. This judgement was almost laughably predictable when the last thing the Cult wanted was a decision that went against mandatory vaccination. Judges rule over and over again to benefit the system of which they are a part. Vaccination disputes that come before them are invariably delivered in favour of doctors and authorities representing the view of the state which owns the judiciary. Oh, yes, and we have even had calls to stop putting 'Covid-19' on death certificates within 28 days of a 'positive test' because it is claimed the practice makes the 'vaccine' appear not to work. They are laughing at you.

The scale of madness, inhumanity and things to come was highlighted when those not 'vaccinated' for 'Covid' were refused evacuation from the Caribbean island of St Vincent during massive volcanic eruptions. Cruise ships taking residents to the safety of another island allowed only the 'vaccinated' to board and the rest were left to their fate. Even in life and death situations like this we see 'Covid' stripping people of their most basic human instincts and the insanity is even more extreme when you think that fake 'vaccine'-makers are not even claiming their body-manipulating concoctions stop 'infection' and 'transmission' of a 'virus' that doesn't exist. St Vincent Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves said: 'The chief medical officer will be identifying the persons already vaccinated so that we can get them on the ship.' Note again the power of the chief medical officer who, like Whitty in the UK, will be answering to the World Health Organization. This is the Cult network structure that has overridden politicians who 'follow the science' which means doing what WHO-controlled 'medical officers' and 'science advisers' tell them. Gonsalves even said that residents who were 'vaccinated' after the order so they could board the ships would still be refused entry due to possible side effects such as 'wooziness in the head'. The good news is that if they were woozy enough in the head they could qualify to be prime minister of St Vincent.

Microchipping freedom

The European judgement will be used at some point to justify moves to enforce the 'Covid' DNA-manipulating procedure. Sandra Ro, CEO of the Global Blockchain Business Council, told a World Economic Forum event that she hoped 'vaccine passports' would help to 'drive forced consent and standardisation' of global digital identity schemes: 'I'm hoping with the desire and global demand for some sort of vaccine passport – so that people can get travelling and working again – [it] will drive forced consent, standardisation, and frankly, cooperation across the world.' The lady is either not very bright, or thoroughly mendacious, to use the term 'forced consent'.

You do not 'consent' if you are forced – you *submit*. She was describing what the plan has been all along and that's to enforce a digital identity on every human without which they could not function. 'Vaccine passports' are opening the door and are far from the end goal. A digital identity would allow you to be tracked in everything you do in cyberspace and this is the same technique used by Cult-owned China to enforce its social credit system of total control. The ultimate 'passport' is planned to be a microchip as my books have warned for nearly 30 years. Those nice people at the Pentagon working for the Cult-controlled Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) claimed in April, 2021, they have developed a microchip inserted under the skin to detect 'asymptomatic Covid-19 infection' before it becomes an outbreak and a 'revolutionary filter' that can remove the 'virus' from the blood when attached to a dialysis machine. The only problems with this are that the 'virus' does not exist and people transmitting the 'virus' with no symptoms is brain-numbing bullshit. This is, of course, not a ruse to get people to be microchipped for very different reasons. DARPA also said it was producing a one-stop 'vaccine' for the 'virus' and all 'variants'. One of the most sinister organisations on Planet Earth is doing this? Better have it then. These people are insane because Wetiko that possesses them is insane.

Researchers from the Salk Institute in California announced they have created an embryo that is part human and part monkey. My books going back to the 1990s have exposed experiments in top secret underground facilities in the United States where humans are being crossed with animal and non-human 'extraterrestrial' species. They are now easing that long-developed capability into the public arena and there is much more to come given we are dealing with psychiatric basket cases. Talking of which – Elon Musk's scientists at Neuralink trained a monkey to play Pong and other puzzles on a computer screen using a joystick and when the monkey made the correct move a metal tube squirted banana smoothie into his mouth which is the basic technique for training humans into unquestioning compliance. Two Neuralink chips were in the monkey's skull and

more than 2,000 wires ‘fanned out’ into its brain. Eventually the monkey played a video game purely with its brain waves. Psychopathic narcissist Musk said the ‘breakthrough’ was a step towards putting Neuralink chips into human skulls and merging minds with artificial intelligence. *Exactly*. This man is so dark and Cult to his DNA.

World Economic Fascism (WEF)

The World Economic Forum is telling you the plan by the statements made at its many and various events. Cult-owned fascist YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki spoke at the 2021 WEF Global Technology Governance Summit (see the name) in which 40 governments and 150 companies met to ensure ‘the responsible design and deployment of emerging technologies’. Orwellian translation: ‘Ensuring the design and deployment of long-planned technologies will advance the Cult agenda for control and censorship.’ Freedom-destroyer and Nuremberg-bound Wojcicki expressed support for tech platforms like hers to censor content that is ‘technically legal but could be harmful’. Who decides what is ‘harmful’? She does and they do. ‘Harmful’ will be whatever the Cult doesn’t want people to see and we have legislation proposed by the UK government that would censor content on the basis of ‘harm’ no matter if the information is fair, legal and provably true. Make that *especially* if it is fair, legal and provably true. Wojcicki called for a global coalition to be formed to enforce content moderation standards through automated censorship. This is a woman and mega-censor so self-deluded that she shamelessly accepted a ‘free expression’ award – *Wojcicki* – in an event sponsored by her own *YouTube*. They have no shame and no self-awareness.

You know that ‘Covid’ is a scam and Wojcicki a Cult operative when YouTube is censoring medical and scientific opinion purely on the grounds of whether it supports or opposes the Cult ‘Covid’ narrative. Florida governor Ron DeSantis compiled an expert panel with four professors of medicine from Harvard, Oxford, and Stanford Universities who spoke against forcing children and

vaccinated people to wear masks. They also said there was no proof that lockdowns reduced spread or death rates of 'Covid-19'. Cult-gofer Wojcicki and her YouTube deleted the panel video 'because it included content that contradicts the consensus of local and global health authorities regarding the efficacy of masks to prevent the spread of Covid-19'. This 'consensus' refers to what the Cult tells the World Health Organization to say and the WHO tells 'local health authorities' to do. Wojcicki knows this, of course. The panellists pointed out that censorship of scientific debate was responsible for deaths from many causes, but Wojcicki couldn't care less. She would not dare go against what she is told and as a disgrace to humanity she wouldn't want to anyway. The UK government is seeking to pass a fascist 'Online Safety Bill' to specifically target with massive fines and other means non-censored video and social media platforms to make them censor 'lawful but harmful' content like the Cult-owned Facebook, Twitter, Google and YouTube. What is 'lawful but harmful' would be decided by the fascist Blair-created Ofcom.

Another WEF obsession is a cyber-attack on the financial system and this is clearly what the Cult has planned to take down the bank accounts of everyone – except theirs. Those that think they have enough money for the Cult agenda not to matter to them have got a big lesson coming if they continue to ignore what is staring them in the face. The World Economic Forum, funded by Gates and fronted by Klaus Schwab, announced it would be running a 'simulation' with the Russian government and global banks of just such an attack called Cyber Polygon 2021. What they simulate – as with the 'Covid' Event 201 – they plan to instigate. The WEF is involved in a project with the Cult-owned Carnegie Endowment for International Peace called the WEF-Carnegie Cyber Policy Initiative which seeks to merge Wall Street banks, 'regulators' (I love it) and intelligence agencies to 'prevent' (arrange and allow) a cyber-attack that would bring down the global financial system as long planned by those that control the WEF and the Carnegie operation. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace sent an instruction to First World

War US President Woodrow Wilson not to let the war end before society had been irreversibly transformed.

The Wuhan lab diversion

As I close, the Cult-controlled authorities and lapdog media are systematically pushing 'the virus was released from the Wuhan lab' narrative. There are two versions – it happened by accident and it happened on purpose. Both are nonsense. The perceived existence of the never-shown-to-exist 'virus' is vital to sell the impression that there is actually an infective agent to deal with and to allow the endless potential for terrifying the population with 'variants' of a 'virus' that does not exist. The authorities at the time of writing are going with the 'by accident' while the alternative media is promoting the 'on purpose'. Cable news host Tucker Carlson who has questioned aspects of lockdown and 'vaccine' compulsion has bought the Wuhan lab story. 'Everyone now agrees' he said. Well, I don't and many others don't and the question is *why* does the system and its media suddenly 'agree'? When the media moves as one unit with a narrative it is always a lie – witness the hour by hour mendacity of the 'Covid' era. Why would this Cult-owned combination which has unleashed lies like machine gun fire suddenly 'agree' to tell the truth??

Much of the alternative media is buying the lie because it fits the conspiracy narrative, but it's the *wrong* conspiracy. The real conspiracy is that *there is no virus* and that is what the Cult is desperate to hide. The idea that the 'virus' was released by accident is ludicrous when the whole 'Covid' hoax was clearly long-planned and waiting to be played out as it was so fast in accordance with the Rockefeller document and Event 201. So they prepared everything in detail over decades and then sat around strumming their fingers waiting for an 'accidental' release from a bio-lab? *What??* It's crazy. Then there's the 'on purpose' claim. You want to circulate a 'deadly virus' and hide the fact that you've done so and you release it down the street from the highest-level bio-lab in China? I repeat – *What??*

You would release it far from that lab to stop any association being made. But, no, we'll do it in a place where the connection was certain to be made. Why would you need to scam 'cases' and 'deaths' and pay hospitals to diagnose 'Covid-19' if you had a real 'virus'? What are sections of the alternative media doing believing this crap? Where were all the mass deaths in Wuhan from a 'deadly pathogen' when the recovery to normal life after the initial propaganda was dramatic in speed? Why isn't the 'deadly pathogen' now circulating all over China with bodies in the street? Once again we have the technique of tell them what they want to hear and they will likely believe it. The alternative media has its 'conspiracy' and with Carlson it fits with his 'China is the danger' narrative over years. China *is* a danger as a global Cult operations centre, but not for this reason. The Wuhan lab story also has the potential to instigate conflict with China when at some stage the plan is to trigger a Problem-Reaction-Solution confrontation with the West. Question everything – *everything* – and especially when the media agrees on a common party line.

Third wave ... fourth wave ... fifth wave ...

As the book went into production the world was being set up for more lockdowns and a 'third wave' supported by invented 'variants' that were increasing all the time and will continue to do so in public statements and computer programs, but not in reality. India became the new Italy in the 'Covid' propaganda campaign and we were told to be frightened of the new 'Indian strain'. Somehow I couldn't find it within myself to do so. A document produced for the UK government entitled 'Summary of further modelling of easing of restrictions – Roadmap Step 2' declared that a third wave was inevitable (of course when it's in the script) and it would be the fault of children and those who refuse the health-destroying fake 'Covid vaccine'. One of the computer models involved came from the Cult-owned *Imperial College* and the other from Warwick University which I wouldn't trust to tell me the date in a calendar factory. The document states that both models presumed extremely high uptake

of the 'Covid vaccines' and didn't allow for 'variants'. The document states: 'The resurgence is a result of some people (mostly children) being ineligible for vaccination; others choosing not to receive the vaccine; and others being vaccinated but not perfectly protected.' The mendacity takes the breath away. Okay, blame those with a brain who won't take the DNA-modifying shots and put more pressure on children to have it as 'trials' were underway involving children as young as six months with parents who give insanity a bad name. Massive pressure is being put on the young to have the fake 'vaccine' and child age consent limits have been systematically lowered around the world to stop parents intervening. Most extraordinary about the document was its claim that the 'third wave' would be driven by 'the resurgence in both hospitalisations and deaths ... dominated by *those that have received two doses of the vaccine*, comprising around 60-70% of the wave respectively'. The predicted peak of the 'third wave' suggested 300 deaths per day with 250 of them *fully 'vaccinated' people*. How many more lies do acquiescers need to be told before they see the obvious? Those who took the jab to 'protect themselves' are projected to be those who mostly get sick and die? So what's in the 'vaccine'? The document went on:

It is possible that a summer of low prevalence could be followed by substantial increases in incidence over the following autumn and winter. Low prevalence in late summer should not be taken as an indication that SARS-CoV-2 has retreated or that the population has high enough levels of immunity to prevent another wave.

They are telling you the script and while many British people believed 'Covid' restrictions would end in the summer of 2021 the government was preparing for them to be ongoing. Authorities were awarding contracts for 'Covid marshals' to police the restrictions with contracts starting in July, 2021, and going through to January 31st, 2022, and the government was advertising for 'Media Buying Services' to secure media propaganda slots worth a potential £320 million for 'Covid-19 campaigns' with a contract not ending until March, 2022. The recipient – via a list of other front companies – was reported to be American media marketing giant Omnicom Group

Inc. While money is no object for 'Covid' the UK waiting list for all other treatment – including life-threatening conditions – passed 4.5 million. Meantime the Cult is seeking to control all official 'inquiries' to block revelations about what has really been happening and why. It must not be allowed to – we need Nuremberg jury trials in every country. The cover-up doesn't get more obvious than appointing ultra-Zionist professor Philip Zelikow to oversee two dozen US virologists, public health officials, clinicians, former government officials and four American 'charitable foundations' to 'learn the lessons' of the 'Covid' debacle. The personnel will be those that created and perpetuated the 'Covid' lies while Zelikow is the former executive director of the 9/11 Commission who ensured that the truth about those attacks never came out and produced a report that must be among the most mendacious and manipulative documents ever written – see *The Trigger* for the detailed exposure of the almost unimaginable 9/11 story in which Sabbatians can be found at every level.

Passive no more

People are increasingly challenging the authorities with amazing numbers of people taking to the streets in London well beyond the ability of the Face-Nappies to stop them. Instead the Nappies choose situations away from the mass crowds to target, intimidate, and seek to promote the impression of 'violent protestors'. One such incident happened in London's Hyde Park. Hundreds of thousands walking through the streets in protest against 'Covid' fascism were ignored by the Cult-owned BBC and most of the rest of the mainstream media, but they delighted in reporting how police were injured in 'clashes with protestors'. The truth was that a group of people gathered in Hyde Park at the end of one march when most had gone home and they were peacefully having a good time with music and chat. Face-Nappies who couldn't deal with the full-march crowd then waded in with their batons and got more than they bargained for. Instead of just standing for this criminal brutality the crowd used their numerical superiority to push the Face-Nappies out of the

park. Eventually the Nappies turned and ran. Unfortunately two or three idiots in the crowd threw drink cans striking two officers which gave the media and the government the image they wanted to discredit the 99.9999 percent who were peaceful. The idiots walked straight into the trap and we must always be aware of potential agent provocateurs used by the authorities to discredit their targets.

This response from the crowd – the can people apart – must be a turning point when the public no longer stand by while the innocent are arrested and brutally attacked by the Face-Nappies. That doesn't mean to be violent, that's the last thing we need. We'll leave the violence to the Face-Nappies and government. But it does mean that when the Face-Nappies use violence against peaceful people the numerical superiority is employed to stop them and make citizen's arrests or Common Law arrests for a breach of the peace. The time for being passive in the face of fascism is over.

We are the many, they are the few, and we need to make that count before there is no freedom left and our children and grandchildren face an ongoing fascist nightmare.

COME ON PEOPLE – IT'S TIME.

One final thought ...

The power of love
A force from above
Cleaning my soul
Flame on burn desire
Love with tongues of fire
Purge the soul
Make love your goal

I'll protect you from the hooded claw
Keep the vampires from your door
When the chips are down I'll be around
With my undying, death-defying
Love for you

Envy will hurt itself
Let yourself be beautiful
Sparkling love, flowers
And pearls and pretty girls
Love is like an energy
Rushin' rushin' inside of me

This time we go sublime
Lovers entwine, divine, divine,
Love is danger, love is pleasure
Love is pure – the only treasure

I'm so in love with you
Purge the soul
Make love your goal

The power of love
A force from above
Cleaning my soul
The power of love
A force from above
A sky-scraping dove

Flame on burn desire
Love with tongues of fire
Purge the soul
Make love your goal

Frankie Goes To Hollywood

APPENDIX

Cowan-Kaufman-Morell Statement on Virus Isolation (SOVI)

Isolation: The action of isolating; the fact or condition of being isolated or standing alone; separation from other things or persons; solitariness

Oxford English Dictionary

The controversy over whether the SARS-CoV-2 virus has ever been isolated or purified continues. However, using the above definition, common sense, the laws of logic and the dictates of science, any unbiased person must come to the conclusion that the SARS-CoV-2 virus has never been isolated or purified. As a result, no confirmation of the virus' existence can be found. The logical, common sense, and scientific consequences of this fact are:

- the structure and composition of something not shown to exist can't be known, including the presence, structure, and function of any hypothetical spike or other proteins;
- the genetic sequence of something that has never been found can't be known;
- "variants" of something that hasn't been shown to exist can't be known;
- it's impossible to demonstrate that SARS-CoV-2 causes a disease called Covid-19.

In as concise terms as possible, here's the proper way to isolate, characterize and demonstrate a new virus. First, one takes samples (blood, sputum, secretions) from many people (e.g. 500) with symptoms which are unique and specific enough to characterize an illness. Without mixing these samples with ANY tissue or products that also contain genetic material, the virologist macerates, filters and ultracentrifuges i.e. *purifies* the specimen. This common virology technique, done for decades to isolate bacteriophages¹ and so-called giant viruses in every virology lab, then allows the virologist to demonstrate with electron microscopy thousands of identically sized and shaped particles. These particles are the isolated and purified virus.

These identical particles are then checked for uniformity by physical and/or microscopic techniques. Once the purity is determined, the particles may be further characterized. This would include examining the structure, morphology, and chemical composition of the particles. Next, their genetic makeup is characterized by extracting the genetic material directly from the purified particles and using genetic-sequencing techniques, such as Sanger sequencing, that have also been around for decades. Then one does an analysis to confirm that these uniform particles are exogenous (outside) in origin as a virus is conceptualized to be, and not the normal breakdown products of dead and dying tissues.² (As of May 2020, we know that virologists have no way to determine whether the particles they're seeing are viruses or just normal breakdown products of dead and dying tissues.)³

1 Isolation, characterization and analysis of bacteriophages from the haloalkaline lake Elmenteita, Kenya Julia Khayeli Akhwale et al, PLOS One, Published: April 25, 2019.
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0215734> – accessed 2/15/21

2 "Extracellular Vesicles Derived From Apoptotic Cells: An Essential Link Between Death and Regeneration," Maojiao Li et al, Frontiers in Cell and Developmental Biology, 2020 October 2.
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcell.2020.573511/full> – accessed 2/15/21

If we have come this far then we have fully isolated, characterized, and genetically sequenced an exogenous virus particle. However, we still have to show it is causally related to a disease. This is carried out by exposing a group of healthy subjects (animals are usually used) to this isolated, purified virus in the manner in which the disease is thought to be transmitted. If the animals get sick with the same disease, as confirmed by clinical and autopsy findings, one has now shown that the virus actually causes a disease. This demonstrates infectivity and transmission of an infectious agent.

None of these steps has even been attempted with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, nor have all these steps been successfully performed for any so-called pathogenic virus. Our research indicates that a single study showing these steps does not exist in the medical literature.

Instead, since 1954, virologists have taken unpurified samples from a relatively few people, often less than ten, with a similar disease. They then minimally process this sample and inoculate this unpurified sample onto tissue culture containing usually four to six other types of material – all of which contain identical genetic material as to what is called a “virus.” The tissue culture is starved and poisoned and naturally disintegrates into many types of particles, some of which contain genetic material. Against all common sense, logic, use of the English language and scientific integrity, this process is called “virus isolation.” This brew containing fragments of genetic material from many sources is then subjected to genetic analysis, which then creates in a computer-simulation process the alleged sequence of the alleged virus, a so called in silico genome. At no time is an actual virus confirmed by electron microscopy. At no time is a genome extracted and sequenced from an actual virus. This is scientific fraud.

The observation that the unpurified specimen — inoculated onto tissue culture along with toxic antibiotics, bovine fetal tissue, amniotic fluid and other tissues — destroys the kidney tissue onto which it is inoculated is given as evidence of the virus' existence and pathogenicity. This is scientific fraud.

From now on, when anyone gives you a paper that suggests the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been isolated, please check the methods sections. If the researchers used Vero cells or any other culture method, you know that their process was not isolation. You will hear the following excuses for why actual isolation isn't done:

1. There were not enough virus particles found in samples from patients to analyze.
2. Viruses are intracellular parasites; they can't be found outside the cell in this manner.

If No. 1 is correct, and we can't find the virus in the sputum of sick people, then on what evidence do we think the virus is dangerous or even lethal? If No. 2 is correct, then how is the virus spread from person to person? We are told it emerges from the cell to infect others. Then why isn't it possible to find it?

Finally, questioning these virology techniques and conclusions is not some distraction or divisive issue. Shining the light on this truth is essential to stop this terrible fraud that humanity is confronting. For, as we now know, if the virus has never been isolated, sequenced or shown to cause illness, if the virus is imaginary, then why are we wearing masks, social distancing and putting the whole world into prison?

Finally, if pathogenic viruses don't exist, then what is going into those injectable devices erroneously called "vaccines," and what is their purpose? This scientific question is the most urgent and relevant one of our time.

We are correct. The SARS-CoV2 virus does not exist.

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Ickonic is something that has been a dream of mine for the last 5 years, growing up around alternative information I have always had a natural interest in what is going on in the World and what could I do to make it better. Across the range of subjects and positions of influence occupied mainly by people who don't strive to make things better it's the Media that I have always found the most frustrating and fascinating. Mainly because if the Media did their Jobs properly then so much of the negative things happening in the World simply would not be able to happen, because they would be exposed within a heartbeat.

Free Press and the Opportunities that the internet could have given would mean that the Media are able to expose things like never before and hold people to account for their actions. As we all know there are 'Untouchables' that walk among us, people the Media simply won't touch, expose or investigate and that leads to the dark underworlds that infest the establishment the World over. Well I say enough, it's time for something different, a different kind of Media, where no one is off limits from exposing and investigating. All we're interested in at Ickonic is the truth of what is really going on in the World on whichever subject we're covering.

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It's time...

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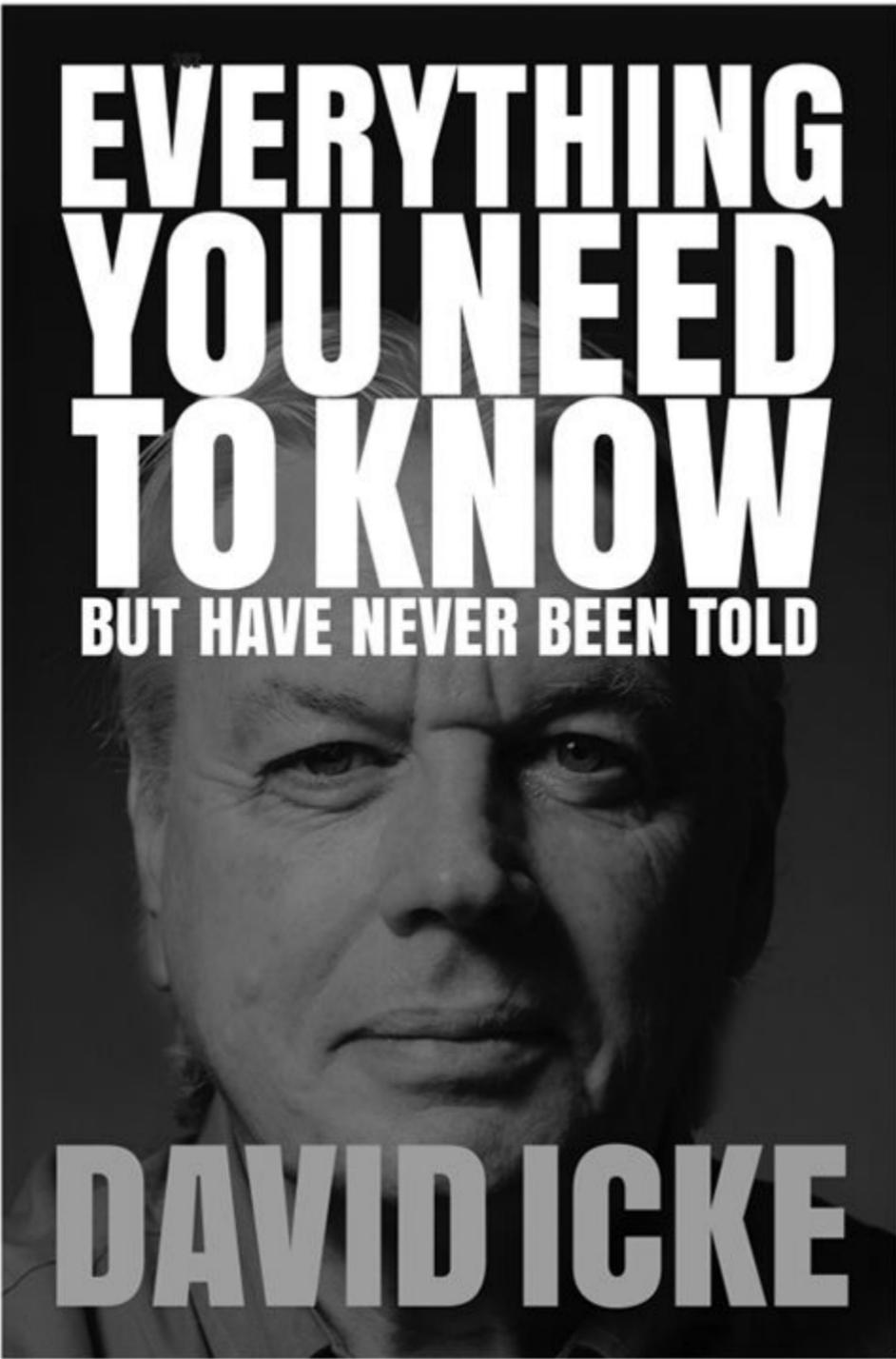
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